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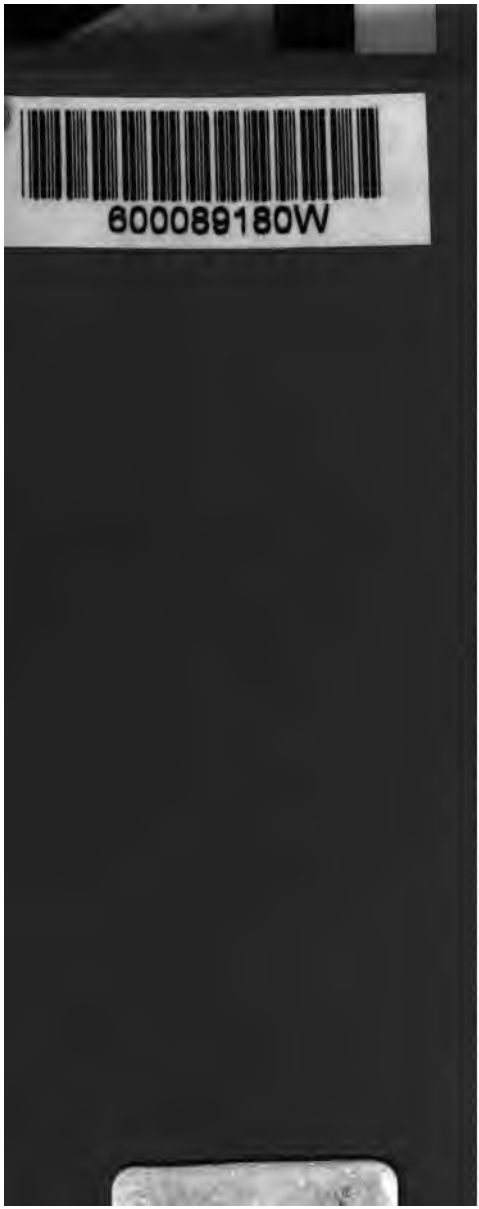
THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE

A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN DAILY LIFE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THE

MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE.

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A STORY OF

CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN DAILY LIFE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "ISA GRAEME'S WORLD," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

AN open door, and the soft rays of the late autumn sun streaming across the room. Our light tap brings no answer, but I have the open-sesame. You may enter with me without fear of intrusion.

We may have some time to wait: let us look about us, and learn of the occupants of the room from the character of their surroundings. We express ourselves over and over in the inanimate companions which we gather about us. Your powers of observa-

tion, like every gift you have received, are to be made the most of, to grow and strengthen by exercise.

You see that this is the common family-room; for there are traces, not of disorder, but of use, in the comfortably adjusted curtain, the open blinds, and the few little articles in frequent use within easy reach. The bright carpet is considerably worn: it is mended, there by the stove, with colors carefully matched, the work of deft fingers watchful of the little wastes.

There is a tall geranium laden with rich scarlet blossoms on the broad window-seat, and an ivy just starting on a pilgrimage for higher light. "It must be a lady's sitting-room, then," do you say? Not positive evidence. I have seen God's sweetest flowers in dingy office-windows, where no lady ever entered, and only they bore their silent testimony to the love of beauty in the heart of

the dull, sallow-faced man at the desk. You must look farther.

The books — ah, yes! you are on a good track now. I seldom enter a stranger's room without a glance at the books. If they are light, shallow, or vicious, they have weakened or tainted the man or woman. If they are earnest, good, and *used*, they have fed a healthy mind.

The large, handsomely-bound Bible, reposing upon the stand, tells us nothing: while its absence might be noted as heathenish, its presence tells only of conformity to a commonly accepted standard of respectability. But this small, well-worn pocket-Bible on the window-seat, with its many turned-down leaves, with pencil-marks and dates here and there in a lady's hand, and scraps of devotional poems (softly now: we are coming near the very heart of the life lived here), and this "Changed Cross," not

quite closed, as if the reader had just laid it down, — these tell of life directed to life's best ends; and the clipped poems and the open volume speak of a chastened spirit.

Here, too, is dear Thomas à Kempis. How many Christians have grown strong on his meat of the Word! There are volumes of history and miscellaneous reading not much used; an inheritance, maybe, which might belong to man, woman, or child.

Ah! here is a work-basket. That is not usually the property of the father of the family, or the ambition of the son of the house. There is no fancy-work here, no gay worsted, or bright ribbons: only an unfinished shirt, and a darned tablecloth, strong thread, an old needle-book whose beauty faded long ago, and a thimble worn even to holes, tell plainly of the provident mother's many cares.

At the opposite window is a large easy-

chair with an individuality of its own: it is upright and aggressive; and though its recesses are ample, and its glazed arms and hollowed seat bear the marks of faithful service, you would sooner drop upon the cosey rug than accept of its grim hospitality. You do not wonder that the little cane-seat rocker has drawn quite away from it into the very shadow of the green-cushioned chair where are the geranium and the work-basket, the little Bible, and the "Changed Cross." But do you see here this "Mental Philosophy" and "English Analysis"? It is not likely these are for the mother's reading. Ah! and you, too, have spied the dainty ruffled white apron, with the fine needle in the button-hole, which has fallen from the over-full basket to the low chair; and you are ready to exclaim as a bright-eyed girl of fifteen enters the room, "There, I knew it!"

If you had seen Genie Morris's face for

weeks together last summer, you would never have seen the cloud of anxiety, of nervous excitement, it wears now. There are traces of tears on the rosy cheeks, and she moves as softly about the room as if some one slept. But it is only her own little trembling heart she is afraid of rousing; for hasn't she said to it over and over again to-day that it must be still and strong?

With a great effort at subduing the restlessness which had closed her "Analysis," which might as well have been Hebrew or Sanscrit, and had kept her flitting from room to room, she sat resolutely down to work. Not at the apron: she finished that last night, all but the button-holes, and no one but mother could do those; but another long, thin streak in the tablecloth thrust itself conspicuously before her; and surely, if any thing could steady those fidgety fingers, such dull work must. Over and under,

over and under, ran the patient little needle, while the clock on the mantel ticked off another half-hour, and Genie's thoughts, grown more cheerful with the occupation of her hands, running faster, had gone over these coming weeks (if she had only known how many!), and assumed the responsibilities which just now, in imagination, sat gracefully upon her, and successfully overcame the obstacles which turned up at regular places and intervals. If they only would!

CHAPTER II.

SUPPER was over, and father and Warner had gone back to the mill-office. The last dish was washed, and the table laid again for the early breakfast, before there was any time for the "good talk" to which Genie had been looking forward all the afternoon.

While doing their evening work together, as their habit was, Mrs. Blakeslee had chatted cheerily of their work, of the call which they had made together in the afternoon, and the shopping which they were to do on the morrow.

There had not been the slightest allusion to the letter, or the change of plans which it made necessary. Genie wondered much; for her heart, and eyes too at first, were full. But gradually she forgot it for the time, and became animated and quite absorbed in the relative merits of blue or brown cashmere for her winter suit, — blue with knife-plaitings of the same, or brown with bands of gros-grain silk. Of course it needed consideration; for last winter's hat must do duty again this winter, with a little remodelling, and they must be made to harmonize.

"Oh! but, mother," exclaimed Genie suddenly, after she had nearly decided upon the blue, "if I have the brown, there are those brown gloves that you bought two years ago, that were too small for you. I guess I could wear them now."

"So you could, dear, and they are a nice shade."

Genie did not see that the mother's thought came back with a little effort, nor suspect the loving artifice which had so successfully beguiled her from troubled thought.

But when the large rocker and the small one were drawn, in their usual neighborly fashion, near the stove, it came all at once to poor Genie, how she should sit here alone, and listen to the wind, and the ticking of the clock, and the street noises, and how the hour that had always been the brightest of all the day would be the weariest and dreariest. How could she? and her meagre stock of courage quite gave out, and she threw her arms around her mother's neck, crying, —

"O mother, mother! isn't there some other way?"

Mrs. Blakeslee smoothed the wavy hair from the hot forehead, and kissed her ten-

derly. For a few moments she did not speak at all; and Genie felt a tear on her forehead, and knew that the lips which kissed hers trembled too. But when she began again to bemoan herself, and the dreary time coming, her mother checked her.

"There, there, dear: it is not a good time to lay plans, at the close of a weary, trying day. We are all befogged now; and it is wiser to cast out our anchor, and 'wait for the dawn.' We have an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast: you know that, dear," she said with another kiss. "And now we will have our little sing, and then go on with our reading."

The fifteen or twenty minutes which they spent in singing, Genie always enjoyed; but she was sure that she should not know a thing she read.

At first it required a little effort; but

when her mother called her attention to a fine passage, and told an incident which it brought to her mind, Genie's attention was fixed. More than an hour passed, reading, and talking of what she read; and when the hall-door opened, and Mr. Blakeslee entered, Genie laid aside her book, rested and refreshed.

"Give me a text, mother," she said, when they went together for a few last tasks to the kitchen: "it always makes things easier. If I try to find one for myself, I never can decide, but keep on looking: when you give me one, it is always just what I need."

"Take this, then: I have taken it for myself: 'Wait, I say, on the Lord.' Whatever we lack, dear, wisdom or courage, or faith or strength, we will take our station there, and we are sure to receive our portion in due season."

Mr. Blakeslee's mother resided in an ad

joining State. She had been for many years an invalid, the charge of an only daughter; but a sudden accident had laid the faithful nurse aside for an indefinite time, — they "hoped not for long." In their helplessness they could think of no other resource but "John's wife." Could she come to them for a time? There seemed no other alternative. If there had been, Mr. Blakeslee would surely have found it, for he looked at it in every possible light.

Yet it was not of the heavy burden it was laying upon his wife, the long days and nights of ministering care, and anxiety, and that to comparative strangers. It was not at that side of the picture he looked, but at the other, where he saw himself deprived of a thousand little comforts and attentions, the nameless services which he had received, without appreciation or thanks, as his just and inalienable right. The recurrence of

all these, in their due time and place, was not a matter of notice or remark; but the absence of one would have been cause of grievous complaint.

Of her daughter's capabilities he was not a very good judge; for he really had very little acquaintance with her, though she was only eight years old when he married Mrs. Morris, and brought her with her little girl to give new life and brightness to his cheerless home. Genie had been always obedient and respectful: she was not noisy, and he had found her no incumbrance or cause of complaint. She had been always shy in his presence; and hitherto, though Mrs. Blakeslee would have been glad had it been otherwise, their lives had run in distinct channels. "Mother," the wise counsellor, the tender sympathizer, the loving friend and companion, made Genie's world, — a world of love and sunshine and perfect content.

I am afraid Genie, too, looked more upon her share of the trial; but she might well be pardoned for this, for she had never been separated from her mother for a single day.

And, if the others made little of the mother's sacrifice, it had still less place in her own unselfish heart. How to make the most of the two days that would intervene before her departure, how to make their influence and their plans go farthest and widest over the dear home she was leaving, was the special subject of her waiting on the Lord that night. And she slept, at last, with a restful confidence of receiving an answer in the morning, — the "wisdom which is profitable to direct."

They were awake and alert at an early hour. The work to be accomplished had been laid out and systematized, and memoranda made of some things which might otherwise be forgotten, before Mrs. Blakes-

lee left her room, or Genie had opened her eyes, and asked herself the "What is it?" which we always ask ourselves at the waking, when we have lain down with a trouble on our hearts.

But with the full recollection came also her text, "Wait, I say, on the Lord." And Genie, though only a young Christian, had had her precious experiences of thus waiting, had learned for herself how they that wait upon the Lord renew their strength even as he has promised.

The morning work was despatched as soon as possible, that all the out-door business and errands might be attended to to-day, leaving the whole of to-morrow for the baking and brewing and ironing and packing for the journey.

They went first to Mrs. Harty, the washerwoman, to engage her to do the ironing also, and to come for two or three hours on Sat-

urday, though Genie protested this was unnecessary: it was well that Mrs. Blakeslee knew better. The brown cashmere with the silk trimming was purchased, and left at the dressmaker's; and a little new velvet of the same shade, and a scarlet wing, to retrim the old hat, to Genie's entire satisfaction. Then a heavy beaver shawl and a few other articles for Mrs. Blakeslee, and two nice warm flannel wrappers to take to the invalids. Genie did not know that these were purchased with money which her mother had laid aside for a new set of furs.

One call they made together after dinner; and then Genie was left with the remaining errands, and the visit to her school to explain the cause of her absence, and bring home her books; and Mrs. Blakeslee returned by herself, that she might better carry out one of her plans in Genie's absence.

It was not a year since their removal to this city. They had made a few pleasant acquaintances, who might in time become, but could scarcely yet be called, friends. She could think of half a dozen in their old home, any or all of whom she knew would have taken special interest in her little girl during her absence, dropping in upon her often with friendly counsel and sympathy, or aid if aid were needed; but here there was not one. More fully than Genie could, she apprehended the child's loneliness; and there was a long sigh, almost a sob, the only expression ever allowed to cravings hidden away down in her heart.

She had been looking over her Bible for precious words, and this came to her without the looking: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Was it not enough? She was about to put her Bible with her packing; but with a sudden

thought she brought another from up-stairs, and left this just where Genie was always accustomed to seeing it.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BLAKESLEE left on the evening train, so that Genie assumed her new duties as mistress of the house at the beginning of the day. She liked that, and it was with not a little inward elation that she took her mother's place at the neatly-laid table. Of course it was mother's beautiful bread; but Genie had taken special pains with the cutting it in nice uniform slices in the pantry, that no crumbs should litter the table. Her fire had been just right, so that the steak was tender and juicy, and the potatoes nicely browned;

and, over all, the lamp in the centre of the table (for it was still an hour before day) gave a cheery, hospitable look.

If the little short-haired lady behind the tray was a little airy, and rather officious in waiting upon the table, it passed without criticism, and probably without remark, from the two men who made "her family." They evidently considered eating the business on hand; for they ate in perfect silence, except once Warner made a remark to his father, about the business of the day, which was answered with a nod, and once Mr. Blakeslee answered briefly when Genie asked "how far mother was now." How she wished they could all talk about it! she had thought perhaps they would if she started it. There was another long silence. Genie had half a mind to ask what time she would get there; but then, she knew to a minute. Should she say she "hoped it would clear away before

afternoon"? for it was raining now. But, while she was deliberating about it, Mr. Blakeslee pushed back his chair, and left the table, and Warner followed a moment after. The street-door closed with a bang, which left an ugly echo behind.

Genie had eaten very little breakfast: she felt an unaccountable aversion to steak this morning. The fire had been so hot, and she had watched it so carefully! The air in the room seemed close too. She was always an early riser, and had her own morning work; but it had never been cooking the breakfast, and she began to understand why mother was "never hungry in the morning." She rose, and stood for a moment at the east window, where the gray dawn was just breaking. She turned back, and put out the lamp, and regretted it at once; for it was still quite dark, and there was something dismal, almost uncanny, in the shadows

within, and the dull drip, drip, of the rain without. If there were any kind of a thermometer to gauge one's feelings, I am sure Genie's would have marked a good many degrees lower now than when she took her seat at the breakfast-table.

But this would never do. She would not have done credit to her mother's admirable training if she had not known that the morning hours are most precious to the housekeeper, as, indeed, they are to every worker.

The table was cleared, the dishes in orderly piles placed in the kitchen sink, the cook-stove closed so as only to keep the fire, and then she began at the top of the house. The beds were soon made. "Oh, there! she meant to have brought the broom and the dust-pan:" now she must make an extra journey to the kitchen-closet. Mother never made any extra journeys: she must have her wits about her.

The light had not penetrated into the depths of the closet where the broom hung; but, as she took it from the nail, something white fluttered down, and fell at her feet. She picked up the card in surprise, and went to the window to read, —

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily. as to the Lord.

"'Tis this

"Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine," —

in her mother's delicate, distinct hand. The light broke all over Genie's face. Oh, how nice it was! She read it over again, and ran up the stairs.

Every room in use was carefully swept. There was no dust left in the corners or under the beds. "Sweeps a room as for Thy laws," — that made it a different thing. It reminded her of the story of the servant-

girl, who said her "religion made her sweep under the mats too." Was any useful employment less honorable than another, if the motive were high?

Father's room was so full of mother's belongings, and Genie was such a frequent guest there, that the daintiest care of it could be only a pleasure. Now she had come to Warner's: she had no associations with this, only that it was her care; and she thought, "No one will notice whether this room is nicely kept or not, week in and week out, until mother comes home. I don't believe Warner would."

And then she recollected something which she had read and re-read to her mother, because it pleased her so much, of the sculptor who finished with great pains-taking and care the back of a statue to be placed against the wall, because only God would see it; and with a glow of enthusiasm she

took down and dusted all his books, and brushed his coat carefully before she hung it up. Seeing nothing more that she could do to the room, she ran down, smiling a little to herself, and arranged a cluster of her scarlet geraniums and a few late violets, with three or four fragrant geranium-leaves, in a tiny Parian vase. She had half a mind to put it behind the door, where it should be truly like the artist's work; but, with another little smile, she thought it would perhaps be just as unnoticed on his bureau, and she left it there.

She stopped for a moment, after she had finished dusting the sitting-room, to look for the name of the artist whose example had given her an inspiration; and she wondered how many others it might have helped before it came to her, — his act, without his name, — and how he had not even thought of any one knowing it but God. Would she

ever say or do any thing that would help anybody else? Perhaps, by doing it just alone for God, as he did.

When the clock struck nine, Genie was surprised to find she had all her morning work done, and every thing in just the place mother had it; even to the card over the broom, which had given her the right start in all her work, and which should hang there till mother came home. And, though Genie did not know it, she had thought more, and made more advance, than if the two hours had been given to her lessons. Mother's careful forethought had arranged most of to-day's and to-morrow's dinner, so that she could have time for Miss Green, the dress-maker; and so Genie found the day went on much more quickly and cheerily than the gray dawn had promised. All through the day her text had quickened and heartened her.

She wished she had had more acquaintance with grandmother and aunt Mary, so that she might imagine what they were talking about; and whether they were very glad to see mother, "as glad as they ought to be," was the daughter's addition.

When the evening work was finished, she drew her lamp-stand and chair to the stove. Oh, if mother could only be here for this time, she could get through the days! How still and lonely it seemed! Genie was rather cowardly. Before she sat down she wheeled the green chair into its usual place opposite hers, but it was so empty! She was strongly tempted to give up, and have a good cry. She wished she had a special text for the evening, and she tried to think of one.

Then she took up her "Gospel Hymns." They had learned "Till He Come" only the night before; she would sing it over now.

But from the book dropped a letter, sealed, and directed to Miss Virginie Morris. She opened it eagerly, and read: —

My dear little Girl, — When you find this, it will be evening, and you will be alone, and lonely may be; a little tired, and perhaps worried with the over-anxious cares of the young housekeeper; perhaps, too, disappointed and troubled over some failure. [Not yet, thought Genie gladly.] Never mind, my darling: do the very best you can; do your work in the way which you know to be right, and, as far as possible, in just the right time for it; and do it all, even the least thing, for God. It is good to do woman's work, making every thing agreeable and pleasant about the home, for the sake of those we love, who make the home; but that is not the best motive. Don't you see, dear, that if we do what is simply duty, only because it is appreciated, we are doing it just for an equivalent? And, in such a sort of bargain, if the appreciation fail on the other side, the effort is very likely to fail, or at least be very unequal, on our part. But, if we do it for God, who wants us to do *the whole thing* wherever he puts us, it

is all right in any case. [How could mother have so fitted this in with her morning thoughts? but had she not given them the key-note?] And our earnest efforts are always counted for successes on his side, though they may be only poor failures where others look at them. I like to remember that. My little girl will have to be like mother, sister, and daughter, all in one, with loving patience and thought. It makes me gladdest of all to know that she is God's little girl, and he loves her dearly. Do not attempt too much: the time of my absence is so uncertain, that you must not expend your strength needlessly. For the work itself, my little daughter is so good a housekeeper, that I feel no uneasiness at all. [Genie's cheeks flushed with pleasure.] And now, for these evenings, I have a little plan for you, my dear. You promised to write me every Thursday: suppose, instead of writing it all at once, you keep a journal. Write, at this time every night, just what you would tell me if I were in my chair, and you in yours; then send the whole on Thursdays. And now, God bless and keep my precious daughter! Good night.

MOTHER.

How she thought of every thing! Nothing could have pleased Genie better than this plan: she should tell it all while it was fresh then. And, though the day might have seemed uneventful to you, it took a whole happy hour to write it to mother.

CHAPTER IV.

GENIE was coming from the dressmaker's at a rapid pace, for it was nearly eleven o'clock, when she saw advancing toward her their new minister, Mr. Hutchieson. She was pleased, for she was so much of a stranger herself, that, except in her own immediate neighborhood, she met few familiar faces. But though he met her glance, and Genie's pleasure showed itself in a smile, — "a broad grin" she said afterwards to herself, in her mortification, — he passed her without any recognition.

It was only a little thing, but she was so

disappointed, and it stuck in her thoughts so, that its effects went through all the next hour and more. She forgot to set the kettle in the stove, after she had put in the potatoes; and so they were not much more than half done when she put them on the table, though she had kept the men waiting ten minutes. In pouring off the water, in her haste, she burned her hand, not seriously, but enough to smart very unpleasantly. Mr. Blakeslee was impatient; and the hard potatoes were not passed over without some curt remarks, which hurt Genie, and the more, perhaps, because they really were not fit to eat. And, though the meat and the tomatoes and the pie were very nice, no one thought to speak of them; and, when she was alone again with her smarting hand and tingling cheeks, she could well believe that the world turned, for it seemed altogether the other side up since yesterday.

The dishes must be washed nevertheless; and the tramp, tramp, from the kitchen to the pantry, and from the pantry to the cellar, cooled her excitement, and did her good. She was honest enough not to pity herself, and put on an air of injured innocence, because her father had been cross over the result of her carelessness. Her text of yesterday came to her now in her need, and a passage of mother's letter, that "God wants us to do the whole thing for him wherever he puts us." More vaguely she thought, too, of the lives we are building, which her mother so often talked of. How could the whole be true and noble, unless every small brick, even every nail, were put in with a right good will to do our best? And so, while she scoured the knives till they were bright as bright could be, she was unconsciously scouring away other stains, which might have wrought worse evil.

She was rather eager to get to Miss Green's; for her sack was to be cut and trimmed this afternoon, and the broad band of rich gros-grain silk was the very embodiment of quiet elegance to Genie's refined taste. But she did not allow herself to hurry from the kitchen till every thing was in complete order, — the kettle filled for supper, and the kindlings ready to her hand.

Every trace of vexation had vanished from her bright face now, and she gave a sweeping glance around the neat kitchen with the proud satisfaction of an ambitious housekeeper. She had forgotten "those potatoes," but it was just as well: she would recollect them to-morrow, and we may forget the things which are behind if we press forward to better things before.

In almost the same place where she had encountered Mr. Hutchieson in the morning she saw him again now. One glance as-

sured her of his identity, but there was no smile now: her little head went up at a rather dangerous angle, and she might have been a Lady Macbeth in miniature, if that lady wore her hair short, and a little turban hat, which I believe she did not.

She did not see (for she was not looking at him) the inquiring look; but the extended hand and the pleasant voice arrested her: —

"Perhaps I am mistaken: I do make so many mistakes. But I believe this is Miss Blakeslee; and didn't I meet you just here this morning?"

"Yes, sir," she said, putting her little red-mittened hand in his; "not Miss Blakeslee though, but Mrs. Blakeslee's daughter, Genie Morris."

"Ah!" he said: "I thought, after I passed you this morning, that I knew the face; but I was not sure, and I had just accosted a

young man by a name he assured me he never owned, so you see I was a little timid. But, pardon me, it is too cold for you to stand still. Were you going down the street?"

"Yes: away down to Fulton."

"Then, if I may, I will turn and walk with you. I want to improve every opportunity for getting acquainted, and making a place for myself in my new home. I suppose you do not know how lonely one feels to meet only strange faces. I want to know and love them," he said, speaking now as much to himself as to Genie; "but the beginning seems so slow!"

"Indeed I do know," said Genie. "We have only lived here since last spring; and I have very few acquaintances, except at school, and I have only attended since the fall term began."

"Why, I thought it was 'Blakeslee's

Mills' when I was here on a little visit four years ago! So I supposed you were an *old* resident, Miss Genie," and he looked roguishly down into the bright young face.

He was less than thirty himself; and his manner had a frank heartiness, almost boyish, which Genie told her mother in her evening journal "she liked ever so much."

"Yes," she answered. "Father bought the mills five years ago; but he could not dispose of his property in Westport then, and his son came on here, and he has been here all the time. We only moved here last spring."

"Then there are two Blakeslees, I will remember."

He asked her a good many questions about the church and Sunday school; not just to make talk, — Genie would have been quick to detect that, — but because he wanted the information.

And before they reached Fulton Street he had drawn from her, without any direct question and with no abrupt transition, that she was a child of God, and wanted to serve him with all her heart; and he had told her, and even asked her advice, about some plans which he had for enlisting the young people in earnest work this winter.

She had spoken of her mother's absence; and before they separated he said, —

"And you are mistress of the mansion, I suppose, and find your time pretty well filled. What days do you receive?"

"Oh! any day and all days," she said, laughing: "my calls are too few to be any inconvenience."

"Then, may I come round some evening, and bring Mrs. Hutchieson with me? You are at home evenings?"

"Always, except Thursday; and now I shall not be able to go to prayer-meeting

without mother. I shall be glad to see you any time, and I shall hope soon," she said with unaffected grace.

At Miss Green's door he said, "I want a promise from you, Miss Genie."

Genie looked her surprise.

"If I should meet you in the street again, and you should look precisely as you do at this moment, I shall know you at once; but if, instead of your hat being set back from your forehead, it should be dumped down over your eyes, and the rest of your face covered with lace spots (ladies do make such odd changes), how am I to be sure it is you? You will know me; and will you not speak first, or at least not turn your head away?" And he looked at her so mischievously, that Genie felt he knew all about it; and her eyes fell, and her cheeks burned.

But he was waiting for her promise; and when she looked up his eyes were graver,

but even kinder, as he held out his hand, and said gently, "We all make mistakes. 'Evil is wrought by want of thought' a great deal more than by 'want of heart,' if we only knew. Am I forgiven?"

"Oh, yes!" she said eagerly: "I was very foolish. Thank you;" and in the "thank you" she had included the promise, and the frank expression of how much she had enjoyed the interview. And so they separated.

Genie had come home in the morning soured and hurt at a fancied slight, and every thing went wrong: to-night a small act of hearty, kindly interest made her blithe and happy, seeing every thing through rose-colored spectacles.

The fire lighted at once, and the kettle sang a cheery accompaniment to her quick ringing steps, as she laid the table, and lighted the lamps. She had time to make a nice dish of cream-toast. Father and

Warner both liked cream-toast: they ought to have something nice to make up for the potatoes. She put her whole heart in the work, and her success was perfect.

There was no praise accorded it; that was not their way: but, if "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," the ample dish was emptied.

"How is your hand to-night, sis?" said Warner, after Mr. Blakeslee left the table.

It was very rarely that Warner Blakeslee addressed a remark to her or to any one. He was a grave, silent young man, thorough and successful in business, never unkind or in any way disrespectful to Mrs. Blakeslee or Genie, with whom his acquaintance had been very slight until the last few months, but with even a double portion of his father's taciturn reserve. Genie's face expressed her astonishment at the unwonted notice.

"Oh! I had almost forgotten: it is not much burned. How did you know?"

"I saw you blowing it at dinner, and it looked very red. I was thinking this afternoon, I was sorry I did not tell you to bathe it with peppermint."

"Oh, thank you!" said Genie. "I was too busy to think much about it."

But she was surprised and pleased. He had noticed it at the time, thought about it afterwards, and inquired about it now. It was a very little thing, but she felt less alone. What a pleasant day it had been, after all! Little things all? How do we know what are little things? It is as if we saw only one side of an object, and how could we judge accurately of the size of the whole? And then, we are only very little too, heart and soul; and little things make or mar our lives, little words and deeds brighten or darken our days. Only in God's sight do all things assume their just proportions; and he is as watchful that the tiniest

seed shall have its time to grow and ripen as that the great ocean shall not overflow its bounds.

CHAPTER V.

GENIE arose early on Saturday morning, with a confused sense of responsibility. There was the Saturday's baking — bread and pie and cake — and some cleaning to be done. Mrs. Harty could not come till eleven. Genie was glad of it: she wanted to do all her own baking. And, last, — a pleasant little anticipation for the end of a busy day, — her new suit was to be sent home in the afternoon.

The first thing when she came down to the kitchen was to see if her bread-sponge was light. That reporting satisfactorily, the promise for the day was good.

She had just finished her sweeping and dusting, and opened the blinds to let in the early sunshine (mother always said, "Make your kitchen cheery for your work"), when one of her schoolmates called on her way down town. The time was not very opportune; but Genie liked Beulah Moore, and was very glad to see her. They talked of a dozen things. Beulah had a whole budget of school news, and a comical way of telling it, which interested and amused Genie greatly. And then Genie's housekeeping came in for its share: it must be so grand to be "queen of the realm"!

"Why, I expected to find you a foot taller, and your hair grown like the pictures in Ayer's Almanac; but I don't see but you look just as you did at school, barring the kitchen-apron. If I were in your place, now, I would put a switch on top of my head, and every one that came inside the

yard should call me 'Miss Morris.' But poor me, with three sisters older, what opportunity can I have to be dignified? It is no wonder I am such a little roly-poly."

It was not a very deplorable lot, for the little roly-poly was so brimful of good-nature and fun that everybody loved her.

"I wish you could stay all day with me," said Genie, as Beulah drew on her mittens: "can't you come next Saturday, and stay all day?"

"I will lay it before the family, in full council assembled, and let you know the result. You know there are five to govern me: *that* is the reason I am such a model child." But she said it without a shade of ill-nature: the government was not very oppressive.

"I am keeping you, and of course you have baking and lots of *et cetera* to do to-day. I have never tried bread or pies

yet, but I can make real nice cake and fancy dishes. And I love to; for father makes such a fuss if he finds out they are mine, and mother and the girls all praise them. It would not do for me to do it every day: I should be quite spoiled." And, with a kiss, she ran on her way.

But her last words had touched a little sore spot. Genie thought, and wished she had told Beulah, of her mother's better motive. But yet "father's making such a fuss" over Beulah's work had such a heartsome ring! Genie loved appreciation, and felt the absence of it a great deal more than the merry little Beulah would have done.

It was ten o'clock, and she had lost the time she had gained by rising earlier; but she could not find it in her heart to be sorry for Beulah's call. Her bread was ready for the oven, and her oven was soon ready for the bread; then she drew the table near the

stove, and gathered all the materials for her other baking. That was the way mother had taught her; then no time was lost running hither and thither to bring the eggs or sugar or spices with flour-dropping fingers.

When she raised the lid of the box where the receipt-book and spices and flavorings were kept, a card lay on top. Genie read, "In patience possess ye your souls. Charity seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. Charity never faileth."

It was just as if mother were not quite out of the house, this coming upon such little tokens of her thoughtfulness in such odd, unexpected places. And could she really have known how exactly they would fit? Ah, Genie! mother had the same sensitive, craving, human heart, and she had been long enough in Christ's school to learn that there is a sure word of grace for every need. Genie's text was a sort of talisman

against the feeling which Beulah had so unconsciously caused. She was a soldier for Jesus, and right here was her battle-ground. If the Captain smiled upon her, if she could raise her eyes to him, and feel that he could depend upon her, what did it matter, after all?

Mrs. Harty came promptly at eleven, and seemed rather surprised at the nice loaves of bread, and oven full of pies. It had been Genie's purpose to go on with her baking, and to set Mrs. Harty at the preparation of the vegetables for dinner, and afterward the dish-washing and cleaning. But her first intimation of this plan was met with, —

"Niver ye mind, sis: I shall find where to take holt aisy enough. Sure, and I kept house afore yees was born. Jist claar away wid yer things there, and I'll make you a pan o' cookies, enough to last yees a month."

Genie's cheeks grew hot, and her eyes

flashed; but even in the midst of her vexation a comical recollection of Beulah's "Miss Morris" came across her, and Mrs. Harty's "sis" was rather trying to the little lady. But she controlled herself, and said quietly, —

"No, Mrs. Harty: I do not want cookies."

But the big Irishwoman was impenetrable. She looked mildly at her, and said, —

"Of course 'tain't to be expected, Jinny, that yees had sinse what was bist. You's such a slip of a girl, and yer blissid mither away, and only men-folks in the house. I wa'n't findin' no fault wid yous, child. Stirred cake is foine for company; but cookies is what ye'll be wantin' fur ivery day. Run and get me some more flour and some grease, and I'll have ye a nice batch in no time;" and she was actually rolling her sleeves to her shoulders.

Genie's first impulse was to order her out

of the house. Fortunately she remembered that her pies must be done; and she hastened to take them from the oven, and place them on the broad low shelf in the pantry. This gave her a little time for thought. "Charity never faileth." Never? Not under such circumstances as these? Never. "Is not easily provoked, seeketh not her own." But she did want her own way, and surely here it would be right for her to have it. "Thinketh no evil." This poor ignorant woman meant no harm, and did not know, perhaps, that she was impertinent. It was right for her to maintain her authority; and if Mrs. Harty was to come three times a week she must do it from the beginning, but she must not do it in a wrong way.

She tarried a moment in the pantry, after the last pie was put in its place: she did not distinctly pray, yet she did wait upon the Lord, and he renewed her strength.

"Come, come, Jinny, hurry!"

Genie brought a pan from the pantry, and said as coolly as she could, —

"You may take this, and get the potatoes. You will want about a dozen: they are in a barrel at the foot of the stairs. You can bring up a cabbage at the same time, and chop it, — a whole one, for I want it for to-morrow's dinner too. I have the baking all done, you see, but my cakes, and a pudding for dinner. It is time I was about that; for the gentlemen do not like it quite hot, and we always dine at half-past twelve."

There was a little return of the Lady Macbeth, and Mrs. Harty almost dropped the pan from her nerveless fingers; but she had taken it, and Genie turned away to her open cook-book, without abating a whit of her dignity, though the lips did twitch, and the brown eyes flashed, as she heard the heavy tread of Mrs. Harty's feet down the cellar-stairs.

The work went on in silence after this for some time. At last —

"An' wud yees be havin' me put the potato-wather on first?"

"No: we put them in cold water, and set the kettle right in. But see if there is plenty of wood in the stove; won't you, please?"

Mrs. Harty set down her pan with great alacrity, and mended the fire.

The pudding went into the steamer, and a large sponge-cake, light and foaming, into the oven, while a smaller one was spread with jelly, and rolled for the Sunday tea. In the mean time the potatoes had been pared, and set to boil, and the cabbage chopped.

"That is very nice and fine," said Genie kindly.

It was true, and she knew she should have liked to have it noticed if she had done it. Mrs. Harty was pleased.

"An' what wud I do now?"

"You may clear away and wash up these dishes while I lay the table, and then I will prepare the dressing for the cabbage."

When Genie returned to the kitchen, the bowl and spoon she wanted were ready for her on the clean table, and the cream from the cellar.

"Oh, you have every thing ready for me! That is nice. It will only take me a moment now."

Charity never faileth: this was the reward side.

The dinner was excellent, the pudding light as it could be. It was a new receipt: Genie had only made it once before, and she was quite elated with her success. Mr. Blakeslee passed his dish for a third supply, but it was all gone.

"I shouldn't think it was any harder work to cook enough for a meal while you was

about it," he said grumblingly, and then something about "such girls!"

"In patience possess ye your souls: charity is not easily provoked — never faileth." It was well Genie had girded on her armor before: there is no time for it in the conflict.

She did not see Warner look at his father and then at her. There was a little lump in her throat: it had been a trying forenoon, and she was warm and tired, for she had been on her feet since two hours before day; but she swallowed it, and as soon as she could said pleasantly, —

"I will make a larger one next time. I am glad you like it."

Warner staid a few moments after his father left; but Genie did not notice it, as she cleared the table, and put away the victuals. It was good to hear Mrs. Harty's —

"An' now go and rest yerself, miss. Sure, and yees must be tired; and I will

make it all as spick an' span as yerself wud. An' sure, you're yer own mither's daughter, jist."

She did go, with a kind word, leaving all care behind her; sure now that Mrs. Harty would try to do it as she liked to have it done. She took her mother's little Bible with her: somehow, at special times, she liked that better than hers.

When the bell rang at four, she came down, quite rested and refreshed, to examine the new suit, which was perfectly satisfactory.

"This is not mine," Genie said, admiring the lovely scarlet-velvet bow at the throat.

"Yes, ma'am. Your mother sent it down before she went away, to put at the neck when it was finished."

Genie's eyes filled. Could mother really be a hundred miles away?

CHAPTER VI.

THE first Sunday without mother! And Genie had been disappointed in not receiving the expected letter from her the night before.

Mr. Blakeslee usually accompanied his wife to church sabbath mornings; but this morning he rose late, and made no change in his dress. Warner was in his own room, and so Genie went to church alone.

She had a new and pleasant feeling in hearing the Word from her new pastor now, and she almost fancied he remembered her individually in his prayer. He had not left

the pulpit when she passed out among the first, – for her Sunday school must be given up during her mother's absence: father "must have his dinner at one," — but as she passed she looked up frankly, and was repaid with a cordial greeting.

Genie missed her Sunday school, but she had made the resolution that she would prepare every lesson just as carefully as if she were in regular attendance. It was cold in her own room, so she brought her afternoon reading to the sitting-room fire; but she found it difficult there to concentrate her thoughts. Mr. Blakeslee, with unshaven face and unkempt hair, snored upon the lounge. The sun withdrew behind dull masses of clouds, and the wind moaned dismally. It sounded just as it did once, when she was a little child, and she had said spitefully, "Ugly old wind!" and her mother had answered, smiling, "No, not ugly wind; God's wind: we're not afraid."

The whole scene came back to her like a picture: the tiny room in the tiny house, where they two had lived all alone; where love, and only love, ruled the livelong day, and her mother's laugh rang out as gleeful as her own. Of her own father she knew only what she had been told, — that he was noble and generous, but he had died scarcely a year after his marriage. The copy of his picture, which her mother had given her on her twelfth birthday, showed her face, hair, and eyes, of which her own were a perfect counterpart; and she remembered how often in the old times mother had kissed her over and over again, with passionate tears, calling her "papa's very image." Unconscious questions formed themselves in Genie's mind, — questions which had never been there before.

A more prolonged snore turned her attention to the man on the lounge, cold, hard,

forbidding. She went back over all the seven years, and she could not remember one caress, or one word or act of tenderness: had he ever been different from what he was now? Curiously she put together her small stock of facts bearing upon the case. He had lived in their village in his early manhood: how many years she did not know, but mother had known him then; and then he must have lived away a great many years, for she could remember his coming back; and he came often to their house, most all the time for a little while. And then they left the tiny house, and moved to Westport, where they lived in a large house, and everybody loved mother; but, looking back to those old days, she had never since been the bright merry mother she was then. Genie's loyal, loving heart felt that she could not have her other than she was; and yet her heart ached with a new pain.

A new revelation was dawning upon her, of disappointment meekly accepted, a cross which only God knew, a slow fire which was refining the pure gold. How had she lived, and never seen these things before? She had taken just the surface of life, and seen nothing beneath. Every thing seemed to have more meaning than it used to have such a little while ago! Was she growing old so fast?

A new sympathy would bind her closer to her mother after this, — a sympathy all the deeper and sweeter because it must be forever unspoken. Unconsciously she turned the leaves of her mother's Bible, from which she had been reading; and her eyes fell upon the text, "A thousand years in Thy sight are as one day." It was marked, and had two dates. "Poor dear mother!" Genie's head drooped, and with a sob she could not repress she laid her face upon it.

The slight noise roused Mr. Blakeslee; and he rose and stretched himself, observing, "It is 'most five o'clock." So it was; and Genie laid aside her books, and ran to get the supper ready.

She knew she could not go to church in the evening. She had always gone with her mother. Mr. Blakeslee never went then. Warner attended church occasionally, but had no regular place, and never went with them. She lighted the lamps, and arranged the fire; Mr. Blakeslee moved his large chair, and took his newspaper; Warner filled his father's place on the lounge; and Genie returned to the kitchen in no hurry to finish her work. Deprived of her usual Sunday privileges and her mother's society, the long evening in the sitting-room was wearisome in prospect; and after nearly an hour she was slowly putting away the dishes, while the first bell was ringing for church.

Warner was not resting well: perhaps his supper had been too good; at any rate, he was "fidgety." As the result of his cogitation he rose, and went to the kitchen.

"Would you like to have me go to church with you, sis? You can't go alone."

Genie's eyes opened very wide, and she nearly dropped the glass dish from her hands.

"Oh! will you really? How kind you are! I did want to go so much. Oh, yes! thank you, I am so glad!" she said eagerly.

There was an odd smile about Warner's mouth at her extravagant appreciation of his little effort; but Genie did not see as she turned to complete her work.

It seemed to her, and to others too, as if Mr. Hutchieson had never preached as he did that night; and Genie listening with earnest eyes, and an amen in her heart, for the first time in her life put up a prayer

for Warner. Members of one household, standing in the relation of brother and sister, how strange it was that she had never prayed for him before!

Monday morning brought Mrs. Harty. Genie had dreaded another conflict, but it was all clear sailing now. Mrs. Harty, with quick Irish tact, had discerned her misapprehension of the situation, and was respectful and tractable, even to obsequiousness. Genie, following her mother's example, did not encourage her garrulous propensity to give the news of all the families where she worked, and spent no more time in the kitchen than the work required. But when Mrs. Harty, presuming upon the inexperience of her young mistress, boiled only a part of the white clothes, Genie quietly reminded her of the neglect, and insisted upon the work being thoroughly done. After *that* her empire was fully established.

The looked-for letter from mother came in the afternoon. There were two, — one to her father, and one to herself. It was not encouraging. Aunt Mary's condition was worse than she had written them: she suffered very much, and the prospect of Mrs. Blakeslee's return, for weeks at least, was very dubious.

Genie had her first "cry" since her mother went away, over this letter. She had rather been hoping to herself that a week, or a fortnight at the farthest, would bring her home again, and she should be able to give a glowing account of her stewardship, and surrender the post with honor. But, if it were to go on and on and on, should she be able to hold out well? But did not mother's stewardship go on and on? yes, and would not hers too, in any case? And was not all life so? And had not Jesus promised that she should not be tempted

above that she was able to bear? It had been so thus far surely, and she should only have one day at a time. Each day had come out very well, upon the whole; and, as she looked back over them, each day seemed to have some little special brightness, some particular success, of its own.

This gave her an idea: she would recall every night what had been particularly nice or pleasant that day, as a special favor from her heavenly Father. Just now she could think of nothing yet for that day, except her success with Mrs. Harty — she was glad of that. And the reflection which had commenced in tears over her mother's letter ended, on her knees, with grateful thanks to God for the courage which he had put into her heart to go on.

The evening brought another pleasure. She had just seated herself cosily with pencil and paper for her evening report to

her mother, when Mr. and Mrs. Hutchieson called. If this had been her first meeting with both, Genie's girlish shyness, and anxiety to acquit herself creditably as the hostess, would have placed her at disadvantage; but the pleasant precedent of her little walk with Mr. Hutchieson made her so sincerely glad to see them, that she forgot to think about herself, and consequently was as thoroughly the lady at home as her own mother could have wished. The minister's wife was young and timid herself, and felt more at ease with Genie than with the matrons of her husband's parish.

They made a long call, and were still there when Warner came in. Genie rose, and presented "My brother, Mr. Blakeslee," and noted with some surprise and pride his easy, gentlemanly bearing. She had never seen him in the presence of strangers, or scarcely with the family except at meal-times. It

was odd, now that she thought of it: she really had hardly ever thought of him at all. Mr. Hutchieson conversed directly with him for a few minutes, and then they took their leave. The next sabbath evening Genie was all ready, and looking for Warner's offer to accompany her to church; and she was not disappointed.

Beulah Moore dropped in on her way home from school Wednesday afternoon, to say that she "had presented her petition, and it had passed both houses (her parents and sisters), and consequently Genie might look for her in good time Saturday morning." It was something to look forward to, and so the days went by. Now that the first week was over, Genie knew and wrote down just the duties which each day brought; and she was getting over the dread which hung over her at first, of coming unexpectedly upon something which she ought to have done.

What a merry day they had on Saturday! Beulah brought a portentous-looking bundle, which she gravely unrolled, — her work, a new book for Genie to read, several sheets of music to try together, and lastly a large kitchen-apron.

"Why, what do you want of that?" asked Genie.

"You don't suppose I am going to be a drone in the hive? I am going to do half your baking."

"You are too late, then," laughed Genie. "I had Mrs. Harty come yesterday, and I did my Saturday's baking, so that we could have to-day quite to ourselves."

Beulah's countenance fell dolefully.

"That is always my luck. When I think I have found a place to make myself useful, and show what I am made of, it slips away from me. Do let me make a Charlotte Russe for tea; please, now?"

"Can you?"

"Can I? Just let me show you."

Genie had felt a little doubtful what kind of an impression her visitor would produce upon her family. When Mr. Blakeslee came in, Beulah was curled up in his great chair, fanning herself with a newspaper, after her labors. Genie introduced her as she dropped from her perch; but Mr. Blakeslee only bowed grimly, and passed out. Warner came while Genie was busy in the kitchen taking up the dinner; and she was very much astonished to hear, —

"Why, Beulah! how do you do?"

And afterward, —

"Are your people well?"

"Thank you, no;" and then, after an impressive pause, "Father has a sore finger. It was his health you were anxious about, I suppose; but it is on the mend now." Warner laughed.

Genie could hardly believe her ears. What did it all mean? An introduction here would evidently be superfluous.

When her father came in, she seated her guest next herself, and the weighty business began in the usual grim silence. But Beulah was irrepressible. Mr. Blakeslee frowned upon her nonsense, but she was not in the least overawed; then he smiled in spite of himself, and, before he left the table, actually addressed a joking remark to her, and received the answer with an audible laugh. Would wonders never cease? But Beulah was quite unconscious of the wonder, for she was always played with and made much of. Warner was silent, as usual; but he, too, looked amused.

Genie had intended to ask Beulah, when they were alone, how she came to know Warner; but something made her a little reluctant to do so, and by and by she forgot it.

The Charlotte Russe was a perfect success; but no allusion was made to either that or Genie's delicate cream-puffs. Beulah was not accustomed to such want of appreciation, and didn't like it. With a sidelong glance at Genie, she praised both extravagantly, appealing to Mr. Blakeslee "if they were not delicious."

"And it takes so much skill and judgment to prepare these delicate dishes! Really, gentlemen, you are most fortunate in your housekeeper. If, at any time, you should decide to make a change, let me know: I should like to secure her invaluable services for my establishment."

Genie nearly choked with suppressed laughter. She would have disclaimed the Charlotte Russe, but an imploring glance from Beulah stopped her: it would be mortifying after her own praises of it.

To Genie, Beulah's freedom savored of

impertinence; but Mr. Blakeslee did not rebuff her, as Genie half expected.

"Perhaps in that event I might obtain your services."

Beulah shrugged her shoulders.

"Not unless you would like puddings and custards for steady diet."

How the hours had flown, and how happy they had been! But now as Genie stood in the door, and watched them (Warner had kindly said he could as well walk around that way with her), she turned back with a sigh, remembering, with a grieved conscience, that there had not been one word directly for Jesus in all those merry hours. And in her closet in the morning she had prayed for this friend; and it had been a part of her plan for the day, that she should try to win her to the Saviour.

Ah! how many of our days, our gay ones and our sad ones, have "no room for

Jesus"! room for any chance traveller, any idle thought or word, but none for the Master!

CHAPTER VII.

EVER since Mr. Hutchieson commenced his labors among this people, there had been an unwonted attendance upon the services, and a greater earnestness in Christian work. After a time there was a meeting for Christians every afternoon at four o'clock, for prayers. Small at first, it grew to be the ingathering of the whole church. Business-men found they lost nothing by spending this late afternoon-hour there, and were better prepared for the general service of the evening. Tired teachers dropped in on their way home from school, and rested body

and soul. Earnest petitions were presented for the beloved pupils they had just left; and girls and boys came in too, and gained strength to stand up for Jesus among their comrades.

Genie Morris found this meeting a special privilege. She had attended none of the week-evening services; but at this hour she could go and return alone, and without neglecting any home duty. She was only a young Christian, and it was not good for her to be so entirely without any Christian companionship. It was God's mercy to her, as well as to many others, that this meeting had been opened.

On Wednesday afternoon the attendance was unusually large: many who were not Christians had accepted some friendly invitation, knowing nothing of the prayer behind it, and so the room was full. The theme had been, What has Jesus done

for me? Hearts were warm; and glowing words, or tearful, broken utterances of confession, or joyful strains of thanksgiving, came in quick response. And it may have been, the holiest tribute of all came from silent, quivering lips lifted meekly to

> "The Lord, who truly knows
> The heart of every saint."

At the close of the meeting Mr. Hutchieson said, "If we should take the reverse side of this, What have I done for Jesus? we could not fill an hour; nor would it be well if we could. God has noted and remembered every service, even the smallest, which we have performed with his help. We need not recount them. But let us every one take home with us this question: What *am I doing* for Jesus? Take it with us in our round of daily duty: it will not make us unfaithful. Take it with us to our

closets; and may the great Lord of the harvest send us, each one, to his work!"

In thoughtful silence the congregation sought their homes.

The next afternoon a deeper humility was a marked feature of the meeting; and when they sang, —

> "I gave, I gave my life for thee:
> What hast thou given for Me?"

there were tears falling from eyes which seldom wept; and in the brief season of silent prayer which followed, offerings, some of them long withheld, were laid upon the altar, while only God saw and knew. Some of those who had come in on former afternoons, without interest, sat now among them with pale faces, upon which was stamped the eager question, "What must I do to be saved?" It was truly a time of holy consecration.

Genie Morris passed down the street with her head bowed to conceal the tears which she could not keep back. If the sore feeling in her heart had found words, they would have been, "I have never done any thing. I do love Him, yet what can I do? I am only a little girl; I cannot keep my own heart right; I have no influence over anybody in all the world," and her tears quite blinded her.

A quick step gained upon her, and her pastor was soon at her side. When she looked up, and he saw the tear-stained face, he spoke no word of greeting, but walked silently beside her until they reached a more quiet street. Then he said gently, —

"I have been thinking of you to-day, Genie, and your work."

"My work?" She said it almost unconsciously.

"Yes."

The thought came to her of the busy round of every day, breakfast and dinner and tea: she was trying to do this thoroughly and well, and had been not a little proud of her success; but that other work, which he meant, where was it? Another whole block before he spoke again. Then he said —

"Is your father a Christian?"

"No, sir."

Another pause.

"Is your brother a Christian?"

More hesitatingly still came the answer, —

"No."

Some people passed them, and he waited.

"You are a child of God, Genie."

"Oh! I hope so, but only a child, a mere baby;" and her tone was impatient.

"And yet God has seen fit to place you this winter as the priestess of your house, giving you peculiar responsibilities. You

are not too much of a baby to care for its temporal wants, — to prepare the daily food in due season. How is it with the spiritual food? You are caring faithfully for their bodily wants, and this is right; but is this all? is this the most important?"

There was no answer.

"If God should call you, when you are relieved from your present responsibility, what account could you give for this precious opportunity? how would you answer for the souls of those committed now to your hand?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Genie imploringly, "not to *my* hand. It is not my own father or brother," she added in a sort of desperation.

"Has this father any other daughter?"

"No, sir."

"Or this brother any other sister?"

"No."

"Is there no one who loves them to care for their souls?" he said sadly.

"You presented him to me as your brother, I think."

"Yes, I know, but" — Genie did not finish: she was honest with herself, and her cheek flushed at the miserable evasion which should say to a man, "He is my brother," and to God, "No, he is not my brother."

She could not tell Mr. Hutchieson of all the difficulties in the way, — that her father she would not dare to approach, and that her brother was a stranger. But she did say, —

"I cannot have any influence with them, I am sure."

"You have tried, then, and think you have failed?"

It was a hard thing to say, because the truth seemed hard and terrible to her now.

"No, sir, I have never tried."

They walked a little way in silence.

"What am I to do?" she said at last.

"I cannot tell, any more than you; but ask God to teach you, and then be always on the watch for what he will show you. It may be in very small indirect ways, or he may give you some glorious opportunity: only be ready for either. In the mean time you can continue to pray for them."

Genie's heart smote her with a sudden pang.

They were near her home now.

"Perhaps you have other friends, too, whom you can win for your Master. You were standing at the gate the other night, with a friend: I have met you with the same one two or three times."

"Beulah Moore."

"Is she a Christian?"

"No, sir."

"Her parents are, perhaps?"

"No, sir; not any of her family."

He did not press this home: he felt it was not needed. Almost in a whisper she said, —

"I have been very, very unfaithful."

"God forgive us, and help us to do better!" he said solemnly.

He was leaving her with a kind "Good-night." Looking up, and gathering courage from his pitiful face, she said, —

"Ask God to make me *willing*, to give me a heart for the work. You do not know how hard it is, and I am so ignorant!"

"We will both ask. And, you know, it was only the used talents which gained."

Genie threw off her hat and cloak, and went to the kitchen. The fire was quickly kindled, and the table laid, and she had still a little time before six. In sore need, feeling her burden, weary and heavy-laden, she went and spread it all before the Lord, — all

her unfaithfulness in the past, her utter weakness and helplessness and insufficiency for the charge laid upon her.

"For me and my house," she prayed, "that we may all present ourselves together before Thee." Her heart seemed enlarged and strangely warmed toward those for whom she prayed. Even thus was her prayer being answered already; for her heart was inclined toward them as it had never been before. I do not know that there was any more conversation at the table that night than usual, and perhaps only God knew the change; but, for the first time, Genie had opened her heart, and taken these in as belonging to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Warner came in, he tossed her a little note.

"I saw your friend Beulah Moore, and she asked me to give you this."

"Saw Beulah?" she thought: "where could he have seen Beulah at that time in the evening?" The business of the epistle was to ask if she would kindly cut an apron-pattern for her, and she would call for it in the morning; but the note was characteristic, and filled the whole sheet.

It was spicy and entertaining; and, with a sudden impulse, she read it aloud to Warner,

and they laughed together over it. Beulah had spoken of a new piece of music they were learning in school, and she should stop long enough for Genie to run it over with her. Genie had the song, and she went to the organ to try it. When she had finished, Warner, who had thrown himself upon the lounge, said, —

"That is nice, sis: let us have more, please."

With fingers trembling from her own thought, "Was God opening this way?" she removed the sheet, and placed her "Gospel Hymns" in the rack. She sang one after another of these sweet songs; and her heart was as truly lifted in prayer, that a blessing might go with them, as if she had been on her knees in her closet. By and by Mr. Blakeslee came in: a little break in the note showed that Genie knew it; and she finished only that piece, for it was already late bed-time.

Beulah's laughing, rosy face was thrust in at the door at precisely a quarter past eight. It was an odd sort of friendship between these two girls, for they were very different; but Beulah had been the first to show Genie kindness when she was a stranger in the large school three months ago. Many good-natured attentions, of which Beulah made light, had been gratefully treasured in Genie's heart; and school-girl friendships grow apace. When the second school-bell struck, Beulah started.

"Beulah, I want you to stop at our prayer-meeting at the church, on your way home from school this afternoon" ("stop for me," she had been about to say, but that was not quite the truth). "It is at four o'clock, and Miss Barrett and Mrs. Ganson come from school; and it is only a few minutes after the meeting begins."

She tried to say it in a commonplace sort

of way, but it was impossible: she had thought too much about it, and about how Beulah would be likely to receive it; she knew her voice trembled, and her eyes fell.

"Will you be there?"

"Yes."

"Where will you sit?"

"On the north side, the side aisle."

"I don't know as I ever did go to a prayer-meeting," said Beulah meditatively: "they are not very jolly, are they?"

Genie was rather set back.

"They are not dull. You will come, Beulah?"

"I guess so, if you will keep a place for me by you. I declare!" for the last bell struck, and Beulah was off like a hare.

They had just commenced singing, "Weary gleaner whence comest thou?" (and there is no singing in the world like that of a large prayer-meeting, when it is the outpouring of

full hearts), when a little lady in red riding-hood and waterproof, with heavy school-straps of books, came up the north aisle, and took her seat, with a nod and smile, at Genie's side. She was fully ten minutes in advance of any others from the school, and the glowing cheeks and quick breath told the rapid pace at which she had come. That was like her.

At first Genie heard every thing through Beulah's ears. "What would Beulah think of this?" "Could Beulah make fun of that old man's bad grammar," when his matter seemed to Genie almost inspired, and his appeal so touching? She did not dare look at her, for a smile or one of her comical grimaces then would have been profanity. Once, during an importunate prayer for those who were still out of Christ, from one who had just learned the new song himself, Genie, without raising her head, put her

hand into Beulah's, and pressed it lovingly. She was thinking, all through the last singing, what she would say to Beulah on their way home, and how she would ask her forgiveness for not having said it before.

But once on the street Beulah said, —

"I am not going directly home, Genie: I am going round on May Street."

So could Genie have gone round by May Street just as well as not: it was not much out of the way, and it would have given them more time to talk. She was so disappointed! and she wondered what Beulah's errand could have been, that she evidently did not care for her company.

She would have wondered more if she had seen Beulah walk deliberately the whole distance on May Street without making a single stop, turning on to her own street at the last corner. She could hardly have told why, herself: it was not from any deep serious-

ness; but it was all new to her, this tender enthusiasm, this nearness in prayer, which even she felt, and the heart-full singing. It was wonderful: she could not understand it, and she did not want to talk about it.

In the evening, after Genie had put aside her journal, she went to the organ, and began singing. It was near the usual time for Warner to come in, and she would rather be singing before: then, if he wanted to hear it, he would stop down stairs; and, if he didn't care about it, he would go on to his own room as he always used to do.

But before she had finished one verse he came down stairs, — he had not been out since tea, — and took the same position on the lounge. She sang through that hymn, and then she turned suddenly: —

"Can't you sing?"

"Oh! a little bass."

"Please come and sing this with me, then;

won't you?" and she was rather astonished at her own boldness.

He came readily though; and they sang together "We're going home to-morrow," and several other pieces. Genie went to her room that night very happy; and Warner, too, smiled brightly as he said "Good-night."

Genie had misunderstood her brother just where her mother had, and where most people do such natures. He did not repel advances: he only did not, and could not under any circumstances, make them himself. "And though the waters of his soul came up healthy and refreshing, when one really must have them, yet one had to go armed with bucket and line, and draw them up: they never flowed."

Sweetly the incense burned on the altar that night: earnest, yearning petitions went up from the priestess of that house, that all

her household might be gathered in the Everlasting Arms, included in the covenant mercies. She had gained no access to her father yet; but she was waiting and watching, and she prayed that her eyes might be quick to see, and her heart to follow, the first leadings of God's hand. Very lovingly, too, did she plead for Beulah; and then the absent mother was committed to the Father's tender care, and Genie went to her rest. A few weeks ago she had not offered from her heart a single petition for any other but her mother and herself, though some formal words passed her lips morning and evening. But now God had enlarged her heart, and he would enlarge it yet more.

Genie's thoughts were much of Beulah all the next day; but it was Saturday, and she could find no time to go to see her. She did not expect to see her at the prayer-meeting to-day. She would not be likely to come

down on purpose; and Saturday afternoon, too, when the Moores had nearly always some ride, or some pleasant entertainment, expressly for "poor little Beulah, who was so confined all the week." But she was there before Genie, and moved along whispering, —

"I was afraid you weren't coming."

Then the meeting began. There was to be no evening service that night, and so Mr. Hutchieson talked more than he usually did at the prayer-meeting; and his lips seemed to have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. An earnest season of prayer followed; and then they sang, —

"Tell me the old, old story."

A slight sound made Genie turn her head. The tears were falling slowly from Beulah's blue eyes, and she was too unconscious of

them to wipe them away. They sang at closing, —

"One more day's work for Jesus," —

and Genie saw Beulah fold down the leaf in the book which she had found in the pew, and put it in her muff. As soon as they had left the crowd, she said hurriedly, —

"Genie, do you ever pray for me?"

"Yes, I do, and" —

But Beulah interrupted her.

"I am not like you, Genie: I am afraid I never could be. I want you to pray for me, real hard, for there is no one else to; but don't talk to me."

And they walked down the long street in perfect silence. Only when their ways separated, Beulah said pleadingly, —

"You're not angry with me, Genie?"

"Oh, no, no!" and she left a tear with her kiss upon Beulah's rosy cheek.

Warner Blakeslee had finished his Sunday breakfast, which had been ready nearly an hour before Mr. Blakeslee came down; but he still sat, thoughtfully dividing a heap of crumbs with his fork. When the two portions were exactly the same, some idea seemed to have taken definite form.

"Father," he said, "I do not think our having our dinner precisely at one on Sunday is of sufficient importance to keep Genie away from her Sunday school, now that it all comes upon her. I know when — when mother was living, we had only two meals on Sunday; and I do not remember that we suffered in consequence. — And, if we should get ravenous before three o'clock," he said, turning with a smile to Genie, "you don't keep the cupboard locked, do you?"

But Genie could not find her tongue to answer. It was a long speech for Warner, a very long speech for the Blakeslee table;

and Genie's surprise had almost taken away her breath.

Mr. Blakeslee said a little ungraciously, that "he guessed he could stand it;" but this was better than either Warner or Genie had expected; and when he added, turning to Genie, that "he didn't want to be hard on her: she was a good little girl, and did nicely," Genie's astonishment knew no bounds. Her eyes filled with grateful, happy tears, and she could scarcely control herself enough to say, —

"It is very kind in both of you." She almost had to stop there. "We will try it to-day," she went on; "but father, Warner, if either of you don't like it we won't have it so. I couldn't enjoy Sunday school a bit if I thought I ought to be at home."

And she hurried out to the kitchen, where, with her pots and her pans, she could have her happy cry out. "She was a good little

girl, and did nicely:" she said it over to herself, and wrote it to her mother afterwards. It was the first word of praise he had ever given her: she had not even known that he was satisfied. And it had all come through Warner. How did he come to think of it? But it was God's favor, and Genie's thanks went straight to him.

She had never heard Warner speak of his mother before, and the effort which she saw it cost him increased her respect.

After she was all ready for church she remembered, and took a hint from Warner's asking if the cupboard was locked; and tripping lightly to the pantry she removed the dainty brown gloves, and, filling a large plate with crisp ginger-snaps and puffy doughnuts, she placed it conspicuously on the dining-table. They must not have cause to regret their kindness: she would rather they should devour all her yesterday's baking.

CHAPTER IX.

GENIE'S bright sabbath was clouded a little at the close, when she came in from the kitchen just before the first bell rang, and saw Warner going out at the front door, and he did not return. She was disappointed: she wanted to hear Mr. Hutchieson's evening sermon, and even more she wanted Warner to hear it; but she had had so many good things to-day, she must not expect every thing.

Her father remained at home. A short time since, that fact would have suggested nothing to her, except the feeling which we

all have with a presence which is not congenial, giving no companionship for our loneliness, but taking all the freedom from our solitude. But it was different now. She was watching for the leadings of God's hand. Had he any purpose in this arrangement?

Mr. Blakeslee had dozed enough for one day: he had strolled out in the clear, bracing air after his hearty afternoon dinner, and now sat comfortably in his large chair toasting his feet. He had shaved and dressed before dinner. She wished she might ask him to go to church with her; but Genie knew better than to do that when the boots were put away, and the slippers on. It would have been a serious matter indeed that would have drawn Mr. Blakeslee out after that. And Genie would not for the world ask any thing that would seem like presuming upon his kind concession about

the dinner, which he had not spoiled in any way afterward, as she had rather feared he might.

In books, in such cases, she remembered, they always offered to read aloud, and the offer was accepted of course; but in this individual case Mr. Blakeslee had read nothing but his newspapers for years, and she knew he had exhausted them this morning.

She really could not think of a thing she could talk to him about; and she sat, with hands folded in her lap, not liking to take a book herself while he sat there unoccupied. The clock ticked off five minutes, while neither of them moved or spoke. Genie felt nervous and uncomfortable.

"I declare," said Mr. Blakeslee, "I haven't answered your mother's last letter." (Received a week and more ago, Genie thought.)

"Suppose I get you to do it for me now," he said. "I guess it will do just as well for

this time, and I will write again in a few days."

Genie brought her ink and portfolio, thinking to herself it was rather an odd undertaking for her to write a letter to her mother that would be his. What would it be like?

"Well," she said over the blank sheet, trying to look very willing and very unconcerned, "what shall I write?"

"Oh! I don't know. Tell her I got her letter: I am sorry Mary gets on so poorly," and he paused.

Genie wrote rapidly for a moment. One of Gough's funny stories of the Yankee's amanuensis came suddenly across her, and a suppressed laugh choked her: she felt ashamed of herself, but her father had not noticed it. Then she read with a very demure face, "Dear Mother, — Father has just asked me to write for him, as we two sit here

by the fire alone. He is very sorry to hear that aunt Mary improves so slowly;" and she waited for further dictation. There was a long pause. Mr. Blakeslee ran his hands through his hair, and looked into the fire. Genie bit her pen, and wondered what his letters were like when he wrote them himself.

"Oh! you just go on, and fill it up as you like," he said. "I never know what to write to women-folks. I could say all I have to say in a couple of lines."

Genie's loving heart throbbed an indignant little protest, when she remembered that the "women-folks" in this case was his wife, to whom after a month's absence he could say all he had to say in a couple of lines, and did not want to do that himself.

She was calling at Beulah Moore's one day when the mail was brought in, and a thick letter handed to Mrs. Moore. "Another love-letter," laughed Miss Anna.

"Father has been away two weeks, and this is the third double-postage letter mother has had."

The contrast hardened Genie a little. But, after her dinner-work was finished, she had had a good hour with her best friend; and He did not forget her now.

Genie wrote, very slowly at first, with changing color, and fingers trembling a little; then more rapidly. Mr. Blakeslee sat very contentedly watching her, or looking into the fire, until at last she laid aside her pen, and said with a little hesitation, —

"I will read what I have written now, and you can tell me what alterations you want made, or if you want to add any thing;" and she began again.

"DEAR MOTHER, — Father has just asked me to write for him, as we two sit here by the fire alone. He is very sorry to hear that aunt Mary improves so slowly; as I am sure we all are. It must be very

hard to lie in one position for so long. We are all very well, and getting on nicely; at least, I think so. Father has not complained of any neuralgia this winter. Don't you believe it is because I take such good care of him? [Genie stole a sidelong glance, and saw that Mr. Blakeslee smiled.] I am sure I want to; and I do want to fill your place just as far as I can. Mrs. Harty's help is all I need; and you must not think of me as overworking. Father and Warner are both very kind. I have been to Sunday school to-day, but you must not think I disobeyed your charge. I had never said a word about staying, because I knew my place was at home now: it was Warner's and father's own offer to have dinner at three o'clock; so we did to-day. I had a pleasant surprise, too: Mrs. Lounsbury has returned, and none of the girls knew it; so there were only two of the class there, besides myself. The church was very full to-day: they say it is every evening; and the afternoon prayer-meetings are so good, I wish every day you could enjoy them with me. We all miss you very much; but are glad you can be such a help and comfort to grandmother and aunt Mary."

How her pen had flown over the paper last evening! but the feeling that it was her letter, and it wasn't, and that it was all to be read to her father, made it awkward and stiff. When she raised her eyes, asking if there was any thing to add, there was a look in Mr. Blakeslee's face, and a dimness in his eyes, that she had never seen there before.

"I don't know of any thing." Then he added, while she finished and folded her letter, in a voice that sounded hoarse, "Try and keep your heart always like that, sis: don't let it grow hard and dry."

Genie's eyes filled with tears, but she did not know what to say; and after a moment he went on, —

"I don't know but you have always thought me a grim, hard man, Genie, and you never knew me any different; but I have had some pretty tough experiences in my day, and they soured me."

Genie wished she knew something real good to say. Perhaps what she did say was good, though she didn't think much of it. It was only as she came close to his side, and put the folded letter in his hand, —

"But they won't come any more, will they, father? and we will all be happy together when mother comes home."

He took the letter, said, "I will mail it in the morning," and that was all; but they had both travelled a long way towards each other in that hour.

It seemed so still, after a while Genie went to the organ, and said, "Let me sing mother's hymn, please. She does not seem so far away;" and she sang low and softly, —

"What a friend we have in Jesus!"

When she had finished, Mr. Blakeslee said slowly, —

"There is an old hymn I used to like; but I dare say no one sings it now."

Genie turned inquiringly.

"I can't remember scarcely any of it now, only something about" —

"Joy to find in every station
Something still to do or bear."

Genie thought a moment, she was so glad she knew; and touching the keys softly she sang, with her whole heart in it, that grand old hymn, —

"Jesus, I my cross have taken."

"Yes, that's it. I don't know that I have heard it in twenty-five years. I guess it is bed-time now."

There had been a time, then, when he had liked hymns, and he had remembered part of one all these years; and Genie's heart was full of tenderness for him. How glad and

thankful she was that God had kept her at home that night, and they had been alone!

Warner did not come home until late; but at breakfast he handed her a little note, saying, —

"Beulah Moore gave me this for you; but you had gone to bed, so I thought it would keep till morning."

Genie was upon the point of asking a question; but she saw a frown on Mr. Blakeslee's face as he looked quickly at Warner, and Warner's color rose: so she took the note with only a "Thank you," pondering in her heart over this little mystery.

If Beulah's former note was long, this was short enough. It was only, —

SUNDAY NIGHT.

Genie, don't forget your promise, — don't forget it to-night. Mother and Clara say I have studied too hard; but it isn't that. What is it, Genie? I went to church this morning. I wanted to go to your

church. I wanted to see you and your minister, and hear them sing; but I didn't dare to say so. I shall be at the meeting to-morrow afternoon, unless they should fancy I am sick, and keep me home from school. Oh, that would be too bad! Don't forget.

BEULAH.

CHAPTER X.

GENIE did not forget. Many petitions went up from an earnest heart, while the busy hands performed faithfully the many Monday tasks. It was a dark, cloudy day, with a raw west wind blowing. Genie encountered it a good many times during the day, and every time felt more doubtful of meeting her friend at the prayer-meeting.

Beulah was seven years younger than even Jessie, the youngest of her three sisters, and was the pet and darling of the whole household.

An unwonted feeling of impatience pos-

sessed Genie all the afternoon, and she found herself at the church some time before four o'clock. Only a few had gathered yet. They were singing "Sweet hour of prayer" very softly, as if it were only the audible murmur of their hearts. The room was warm and cosey, and the music very sweet, and without the blast was cutting; but Genie was uneasy about Beulah: she would walk down, and meet her if she came from school.

She walked so rapidly, and it was so early, that the whole troop of scholars were just pouring out of the main building. She expected to meet Beulah, as usual, the centre of a merry crowd; but she was nearly the last pupil, and she came slowly and alone.

She looked very much surprised to see her friend waiting for her at the gate; and it hurt Genie that she was not glad of it, for she could not help seeing that she was not.

She was tired when she started from home, the extra walk had been long and cold, and Beulah was cross. Genie was troubled and disheartened.

"Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

Thank God for these beautiful hymns, which have become household words all over our land, and sung their sweet truths into so many hearts!

It was her mother's favorite. Genie had been singing it all the afternoon, and it came back to her now. Walking at Beulah's side, swinging the book-straps between them, stealing a glance at Beulah's compressed lips, she took this new trial which she could not understand to the Lord in prayer; and she was comforted, and was not sorry she

came. She made one or two attempts at conversation; but Beulah's replies were brief and curt, and, remembering her "Don't talk to me," on Saturday, she did not try again; and they walked on in silence.

At the church-door Genie was surprised and dismayed when Beulah took the books from her, and was going on her way. Genie urged her; but Beulah said she "had not meant to go to the meeting," and something about its being "too tiresome, after being in school all day." And then, looking up with a spirit of defiance in the troubled blue eyes, she said she was "sorry she ever had come: she was sure, if it made other people happy, it hadn't made her so," and she turned away.

Genie's heart ached with love and fear. She had a strong feeling that it was not just the question of stopping here, or going home, that Beulah was deciding; and without a thought of the dignified Mr. and Mrs.

Merden, who were coming, with only a feeling that God's time was *now*, she kept fast hold of her friend, and said, with a burst of tears, —

"Oh don't go away! don't! it seems as if you must not go. O Beulah, come, do come!"

Beulah yielded, her own eyes dimmed with sudden tears.

And Jesus was in that meeting; and he came to the troubled little girl, and opened her eyes that she might see and know, and her heart that she might receive him. It was too much! it was too glorious! She sat, forgetting even the friend at her side: she seemed alone with her Saviour; and he had loved her so, and she had never known it! Even when he had called her, she had not known that it was his voice, and would have hidden away from him. Oh! was it all true?

When the meeting closed, she seized both Genie's hands eagerly, and said, —

"Oh! is it true? I do feel, just as they sing, that Jesus loves me, and I am so glad! But do you think it can be true? true for me, I mean."

The lady in front turned at the eager words; and, meeting the shining eyes, she laid her hand tenderly on the one which clasped Genie's, and said, —

"Yes, my child, it is true, and true for you: blessed be his holy name!"

"But you don't know," said Beulah humbly. "I never cared or thought a bit about him. I never thought of any thing but just to have a good time."

Mrs. Lounsbury did not smile at Beulah's expression.

"We love him because he first loved us."

Something in the tone struck Beulah.

"Is that in the Bible?" she asked.

The lady took a small Testament from the book-rack, and found it for her.

The room was nearly empty; but Beulah lingered, as if loath to leave the place. Mrs. Lounsbury saw it, and said, —

"Come with me, girls; let us go and tell Jesus all about it;" and she led the way to the small library-room, and closed the door after them.

Then she kneeled, and put all Beulah's feeling into simple tender words, and committed her to the Saviour's loving care.

"Will you not covenant with Him yourself, now and here?" she whispered to Beulah.

And tremulously, with broken words and thankful tears, Beulah prayed, for the first time she thought; but all the day, and longer, God had been listening to her heart-crying.

When they were alone on the street in the

twilight which was fast coming on, Genie kissed her, and said, —

"O Beulah, I am so glad!"

Beulah returned the kiss; and not another word was spoken as they hurried on, until, when they separated, Beulah said, —

"Dear Genie, I want to tell you all about it some time, but I couldn't to-night. I shouldn't have gone to the meeting if you hadn't come for me; and oh, if I hadn't!"

Mr. Hutchieson had not been unobservant of Genie and her friend. Genie had had no conversation with him since he so opened her eyes to her work.

The next morning he called; and Genie, longing for just such sympathy in her joy over her friend, told him all about it, and they rejoiced together.

"How good God is to let us work for him!" he said.

It brought back to her their talk about her work, and the happy face clouded a little.

"How is it about your work now, Genie?"

Her eyes fell, and she thought for a moment.

"I don't think I have done any thing like real work for him; but I have thought about it a great deal. It troubled me so then, but somehow it has got to be a real comfort too; and there have been ever so many little things that I never expected. I couldn't tell you," she said with changing color; "but it seems as if I just ask, and watch and wait, and follow, and God is going to do the work."

Mr. Hutchieson was wise as well as kind: he only said, —

"I think that is just it, Genie. It is our part to watch and wait and follow, and God leads us on; and it is all his work."

"I want you to pray for my father and brother," she went on eagerly. "God *has* opened little ways. I couldn't tell you, they would seem very little, maybe; but I can see

them, and more every day. But sometimes I get so impatient, and so afraid for them, it seems as if I could not wait," and the tears ran down her cheeks.

Mr. Hutchieson mentally contrasted this eagerness with the cool, annoyed tone in which she had said, "They are not my own father and brother anyway," and saw God's hand, and thanked him.

"We will ask, and trust God, who does these little things which are more than we expect, and is able to do great things for us, and for those we bring to him. And how does the work go on in your own heart, Genie?"

"I don't know," she said simply: "lately it has been so full for my father and Warner and Beulah, that I have almost forgotten about myself. But I don't think Jesus is displeased: I know he does not forget me, for he never seemed so near all the time."

Mr. Hutchieson's own eyes grew moist. "Did you ever read the legend of St. Christopher?"

"No, sir."

"Do you like to hear stories?"

"Oh, very much!" but he noticed the systematic little housekeeper's glance went to the clock, and came back contentedly, assured that there was ample time.

"It is a long time since I read it, but I think you will see what brought it to me just now.

"There was once a great, powerful giant, whose name was Opher. And, as he journeyed, he came near the Black Forest; and for mutual strength and support he joined himself to the company of the emperor. When they came to the edge of the dark, wide forest, the emperor crossed himself devoutly; and the giant, observing with wonder, asked him why he did so. He

replied that a terrible demon inhabited the forest.

"'And are you afraid of him?' asked Opher.

"'Yes, for he is stronger and more powerful than I.'

"'Then I will join *him*,' said Opher; and, leaving the emperor with his retinue, he plunged forward alone into the dismal shades. He had not travelled long or far, ere he encountered the terrible monarch of the wood; but he stood his ground, fearless and strong. And when the demon had learned his story, and his desire to join him, admiring his courage, he accepted his company with grim cordiality; and together they swam deep rivers, and passed through almost impenetrable thickets, and men and beasts fled at their approach. But, when they reached the edge of the wood, the demon prostrated himself before a rude

cross which some devout monk had placed there.

"'Why did you do that?' asked Opher.

"'It is the cross of the holy Son of Mary,' answered the demon.

"'And why did you bow before it?'

"'Because he is greater than I.'

"'Then I will join him,' said Opher.

"And once more he journeyed forward alone. But where should he find the holy Son of Mary, who was greater than the demon, who was greater than the emperor?

He could not guess him in the wood,
Or hear him in the wind.

He sought for him till he was footsore and weary, and well-nigh disheartened. At last he met an old monk, to whom he unfolded his trials; and the monk answered him,—

"'My son, the holy Son of Mary is not here; but if you are willing to seek him by

doing his work, for his sake, you shall find him.'

"And gladly Opher begged to be told his will. It was to stand humbly at the deep river-side, where the pilgrims passed, and help them, as he could, on their way. Nobly and bravely he stood at his post, through sun and wind and storm; and many a pilgrim, well-nigh fainting, received his kindly offices, and went with renewed strength on the way, leaving him the blessing of him that was ready to perish. Once, on a wild night, when the storm raged, and the wind howled, he heard a faint, sweet voice, from the other side, —

"'Dear, good, tall Opher, come and help me over the tide.'

"But the stream was high and turbid, and the danger seemed great. Again the soft low voice came, fainter now, and sweeter, and scarcely heard above the raging waters,

"'Dear, kind, great Opher, come and help me.'

"And, counting his own life lightly, he clasped his girdle about him, and, with his strong staff, made his way slowly and with difficulty through the swollen river to the other bank, where a little child, fair as an angel, waited confidingly the support of his strong arms. Opher took up the light burden tenderly, reverently, and again plunged into the tide; but as the waters rose about him, and the darkness increased, the burden grew so heavy his strength almost failed; but he clasped the strange child more tightly, and, with strength and life almost gone, he reached the shore. Then a voice, sweeter than earthly music, whispered in his ears, —

'"Thou hast found the Son of Mary, the holy Christ, in the person of one of his little ones, for whom thou wouldst have given thy

life, for his sake. And thou shalt be no more called Opher, but Christopher.' In token of the heavenly authority of the message he was bidden to plant his staff in the ground, and it became a beautiful blossoming tree, which filled the whole air with its sweet fragrance; and under its wide-spreading boughs he stretched his weary limbs, and in his deep, sweet sleep the angels bore him away to heaven."

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS drew near. Mrs. Blakeslee had now been away six weeks. Genie would hardly have believed that she could exist six weeks without her mother. But this mother, seeking always the best things for her daughter, if she had had her choice could not have chosen any discipline which would have worked so wisely and well as this long absence.

But Christmas without mother, that was hard. Genie had finished her small preparations, — small in amount, but they had cost

her much thought and self-denial, and hours of patient work.

There was a handkerchief for mother, embroidered in each corner with her own hands — that had already gone on its way; a book for Warner, the selection of which had kept her awake at night sometimes, wavering between what she would like best to have him read, and what he might like best. She knew it would be no kindness to give him something he would not like; and so, guided a little by the kind of books on his shelves, she decided at last upon "Getting on in the World." For her father it was still more difficult; but her quick eyes, on the watch, saw that his pocket-book was old and shabby, and she bought one of larger size with diary combined. For Mrs. Harty she had made on her machine a calico wrapper; and for Beulah she bought "The Words of Jesus;" and she had contributed

to the purchase of a picture for her Sunday-school teacher.

She was not expecting any thing for herself, not even from the dear mother, whose time and thoughts and strength were all occupied, even to utter weariness, Genie feared. She had never had a Christmas present from her father; he discountenanced all "such nonsense," and the others she had not known a Christmas yet: so her little offerings were altogether unselfish, and she had enjoyed the preparation of them all the more.

Her Christmas dinner, too, had been a matter of no small consideration. She felt rather diffident about attempting by herself any thing so formidable as a turkey; but felt sure she could acquit herself creditably with oyster-soup, chicken-pie, and plum-pudding, and that she thought might answer.

All these things passed in review before

her, as she stood in the Christmas-eve twi light, drumming on the window, and watching the falling snow; but it was not of these she thought most. Her bright face was unusually clouded and troubled: something was the matter with Warner, she could not tell what, though she had turned it over in her thoughts a good many times.

For some time (Genie did not remember how long, for she had not noticed his habits much before mother went away), he had dressed carefully, and gone out, two evenings in a week. Now he was at home every evening, but he remained in his room; and it seemed to her she was losing all the little ground she had gained, and they were drifting quite apart again. Not quite, Genie. God has filled your heart with love and kindness for him, and that will hold.

She heard voices on the porch, and drew nearer the window. Mr. Blakeslee was saying,—

"I'd be a man! I wouldn't break my heart for that girl, or any other. Every hand in the mill seems to know all about it."

"Father, no more of that if you please."

She had never heard Warner's voice sound like that. She hurried to the kitchen: she would not like he should see she had been so near the window. She would not like to have him ever know that she had heard any thing about it: it was all new to her.

It was well that table-talk was not the habit of the house, for Mr. Blakeslee looked grim, and as if he might growl upon very small provocation; Warner, who did not come in until they were seated, and the tea poured, was pale even to his lips, and his eyes gleamed; and Genie was so miserably conscious of it all, and so anxious to appear as if she were not, that she was glad when supper was over.

Here was a trouble she must not even

write to mother: she could not take it anywhere but to the Lord. Might it be, after all, the way by which God would lead Warner to himself? But to have no God to go to in trouble? poor, dear brother! and there seemed nothing she could do for him. She pushed aside her writing, for the tears would fall.

"Crying, sis?" said Warner kindly.

He was sitting at the corner window, just where she had stood before tea, and she had not known that he was in the room. He had been watching her while she wrote, and while she sat thinking; and when she pushed away the paper, and cried, he thought she was lonely, and crying for her mother.

"Poor child! I don't wonder you get the blues: father and I are dismal company for you."

"Oh, no! that isn't it! and you mustn't

think I was crying for that," she stammered; for what could she say?

"Is it any thing that I can help, then? any thing that you would like to tell me?"

"No," she said, "I couldn't. I suppose everybody has something to trouble them."

Perhaps in her simplicity she had said the wisest thing that could have been said; for Warner, watching the troubled, tear-stained little face, thought how lonely it was for a mere child like her to have no one to counsel or advise or cheer her; no society but two gruff, busy men, who had little thought or care for her. He wondered, and felt ashamed, that he had thought so little about it: he could not remember a thing that he had done to lighten the burden she was bearing so patiently and cheerfully.

This train of thought certainly did not do him any hurt; and when she had put up her journal, and wiped away her tears, he almost surprised himself by asking, —

"Couldn't we sing, and charm away this trouble, Genie?"

He was rewarded by the bright smile, and the eagerness with which she went to the instrument.

But before they commenced singing, the outer door opened, and there were merry voices, and the stamping of feet in the hall. Genie knew Beulah's step, and ran to meet her: it would cheer Warner too, and she was glad. But, when they came to the sitting-room, her brother had left it.

It was only a brief call; for Beulah and the neighbor who accompanied her had been out to finish their Christmas purchases, and it was growing late, and "snowing fearfully."

The only ostensible purpose of the call was to ask Genie if she would not come to her house for a little while to-morrow afternoon. "Mother said to dinner," but Beulah knew that was not practicable; but it was

"too dull for her to spend the whole day alone." There was another purpose, but that was not to appear to-night.

The lady, who was a stranger to Genie, kindly occupied herself with her mail, while the girls chatted on the other side of the stove.

"I had to come myself," said Beulah. "I suppose I shall have no chance to send notes now: your brother doesn't come to our house any more."

A sudden light dawned upon Genie, and she opened her mouth to ask something, she hardly knew what; but she checked herself. She had her share of curiosity, but she had the refined instincts of the true lady: she must not talk over her brother's affairs with any one, least of all with Beulah, if she guessed rightly. So she stood silent, a little more erect, with arched neck, for her family pride was touched: it was her brother.

Perhaps Beulah thought it incumbent upon her to make some apology for the conduct of their seniors, for she said deprecatingly, —

"I don't know whether it is Jessie or Mr. Blakeslee that is to blame, but I am real sorry:" she was about to add, "and I believe Jessie is too," but she was beginning to understand Genie's silence, and to feel that it was the right thing.

While Beulah tied on her nubia, Genie slipped her little present, unobserved, into her basket. When she kissed Genie "good-night" she said, —

"You must come, for it will be the best Christmas I ever had."

Dear Beulah! but, after Genie came back to the fire, it was of Warner she was thinking most. She liked all Beulah's sisters, for they were all cordial and pleasant to Beulah's friends; but Jessie best of all, for she

was most like Beulah, with a face full of sunshine, and a heart full of love. Wouldn't it all come right some time?

Genie could not miss the noisy Christmas gaiety and merry shouts which rang through other houses, for she had never known them. But she did miss, and for a few moments very sadly, her mother's kiss, and the little surprises, the quiet pleasures, and thoughtful kindness of other Christmas Days, which they had kept together.

But it was the day which reminds us of our Saviour's birth; and Genie sang softly a Christmas carol, while she was dressing, and felt a quiet, holy joy in that one best Christmas gift, which is for high and low, rich and poor, alike, and is as much the best, too, for the rich, whose presents may be gold and diamonds, as for the pauper, who receives only the charity-dinner.

As she placed the steaming coffee-pot on

the tray, she noticed a box on her plate, with her name on the cover: she paused to examine closely; it was Warner's "G," she was sure. Opening it eagerly, it disclosed a pretty neck-chain. Genie would have been happy with the present of any trifle from him, as an evidence that he remembered her and the season; but she liked really nice things, and this was fine and expensive. The smiles were dimpling all her face, as she turned back to the kitchen, and met him coming in the door.

"O Warner! I thank you so much!" and then the tears came too, as they always did when she was very happy. She wanted to kiss him, as any sister would her brother; but she didn't know whether he would like it, and her courage failed her.

"I am glad you like it," he said.

"Oh! it is just what I have wanted ever so long."

"That is just what I have to tell you of my present, then," he said, smiling. "I wonder if you knew that I had been to Clarke's for it once, and he didn't have it."

No, Genie did not know, but she was very glad. She had written on the fly-leaf, "Warner Blakeslee, from his little sister;" and he stood now with the book opened there. She watched him, curious to know what he was thinking. Closing the book again, and looking down at her, he said, —

"I don't know as I should have found out that I had a little sister, if your mother never had gone away."

With a sudden impulse, she said, —

"Are you glad?"

"Very glad," he said gravely. "I should miss her very much if I were to lose her now."

All that from Warner! It was like another Christmas present: Genie was very happy.

Mr. Blakeslee was one of those unfortunate people who do not know how to accept a present, — who make the donor feel awkward and uncomfortable. He said "the pocket-book was a nice one, but she might better have spent her money in some girl-finery for herself: it was all nonsense, this having a set day for everybody to make presents to everybody else." But Genie had not expected much; and she saw he removed the contents of the old one into the new for immediate use, so she was quite satisfied.

Warner turned back at the gate, and called to Genie. There was a package tied to the front door-knob, directed in large letters to "Miss Morris, Esq." Genie carried it in, biting the cords with her teeth as she went. It was a prettily-framed motto, worked in purple and gold; and the words were only three, "Jesus loves me;" and the little note said, —

"Do you remember, Genie darling, they were the first blessed words He spoke to me? and of all the good things which God has given me (and he has given me so many),—

'This is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.'

And so I have worked it alike for you and for me. Don't hang it up in the parlor, or sitting-room, please, but in your own room, in your *best corner* (you know what I mean) as I shall mine. Somehow, Genie, God seems to promise me that before another Christmas some of my loved ones will stand with me. I think it will be dear Jessie first; but they will all come by and by, I know. I am thinking bushels about your coming to-morrow, and to-night I am going down to tie this on your door (modern for coming down chimney). Merry Christmas to you and all your household, from your loving

"BEULAH."

Genie read the note, and placed it in Warner's hand: she had wanted to tell him about Beulah, and this would do it better. She took up the motto to examine again, for

she would not look at him while he read. He laid it down without remark when he had finished, and went out; and Genie went to the preparation of her Christmas dinner.

Then Mrs. Harty came in, dressed in her new wrapper, which she declared "jist the natest fit intirely," pouring out her thanks with real Irish blarney. She insisted upon coming in again after dinner to "do the dishes," and Genie filled a basket afterward for her to take home.

She was glad to have a leisure hour to herself, to tell it all to Jesus before she went to Beulah. She was thinking of Beulah's promise that before another Christmas she should have some of her loved ones with her: would he not promise this to her too? There had been three she had asked for: now Beulah was the Lord's, going joyfully forth to his work; and she felt strong faith that her household should yet be the Lord's.

The two elder Misses Moore had gone out; but Jessie was at home, and very kind. They showed Genie all their Christmas presents, little tokens of love from each of the family, and Beulah thanked her warmly for the book. Genie had only her chain to show them, but it did her good to say, —

"This was my Christmas present from my brother."

Of course Beulah took it first.

"Oh, isn't it lovely! Why, Genie, do you know this cost fifteen dollars? I saw it at Hood's last week, and he had only this one with cameos: the others were cheaper. I am so glad! Wasn't it nice of him?"

"He is so kind!" said Genie, her heart and face glowing.

"May I take it?" asked Miss Jessie; and she went to the window, and seemed to examine it very closely. Then she clasped it herself around Genie's neck, and bent over and kissed her.

Genie had a little hope that the evening mail might bring a letter from her mother: no word from her seemed to shut her out from all the pleasures of this delightful day. But it came in the morning, with another Christmas gift delayed on the way, — her mother's photograph in a neat frame. Genie had only an old one, taken years ago; and her mother had remembered how much she had wished for a good one when they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

THE next sabbath morning when Genie started for church, Warner joined her at the outer door, taking her books from her hand as they passed out.

"O Warner! are you really going to church with me?" she said, her face expressing, even more than her eager tone, her delight.

"Why, yes, I am thinking of it," he said, smiling. "You're astonished, aren't you? I am a heathenish fellow."

"Have been," she corrected, returning his smile: "this is a good time to turn over a

new leaf." Happiness was making her daring.

It was a clear, lovely winter morning, and Genie's spirits rose very high. Warner had never known his quiet little sister could be so entertaining. He was really unusually exhilarated himself, chiefly, he thought, because Genie showed so plainly how very glad she was for his company; and he was beginning to learn the enjoyment of contributing to other people's happiness. But there were several ingredients in his satisfaction which he did not stop to analyze, — the bracing air, the re-action from his recent depression, and the undefined accession of self-respect which every man feels, walking at the side of an attractive, nice-looking lady in whom he feels a certain sort of proprietorship. The streets were full: he met his business acquaintances, and while they bowed to him they glanced admiringly at

Genie; and he, looking down at the bright face, sparkling brown eyes, and tasteful dress, of the dainty little figure tripping at his side, felt a new pride and pleasure in his little sister.

Long before the sermon was finished, Genie felt with wonder and gratitude that the hand of the Lord was in this.

It was the last sabbath of the old year, a backward look over the past, over the barren fields, the selfish lives which God's mercy had prolonged — for what? for another just such a year? God forbid! More than one head was bowed to conceal the penitent tears, and all hearts were touched for the time, though to many it became only one more of the words which, not received as of life unto life, become a savor of death unto death.

Genie's heart was so full, she was not conscious of the tearful pleading face she turned

towards her brother; but he saw and felt it. Her words as they started recurred to him, "a good time for turning over a new leaf." It was time, high time, something in his heart responded.

Genie invited him to stay to Sunday school, and detained him at her side. He had no idea of remaining at first; but there were a good many in the congregation whom he knew, and he was rather surprised to see that most of them stopped. Mr. Hutchieson came to them for a few cordial words, and a telegraphic glance of sympathy with Genie. Mrs. Hutchieson bowed to him across the aisle; and Ross Dennison, a banker, a genial, middle-aged man, whom Warner heartily liked, came and added his invitation to Genie's.

"Do you want to teach me, Dennison?" he said, laughing.

"I am a scholar myself," was the reply,

"with fifteen or twenty other such little shavers. Come along." And Warner, rather to his own surprise, and greatly to Genie's joy, went with him.

The lesson in that class of men took an argumentative, rather than a spiritual turn, much to the leader's regret. The discussion was eloquent and exciting: Bible leaves were turned quickly, and proof after proof brought to bear upon the subject. All were interested and absorbed, and the tap of the superintendent's bell seemed to come in the very middle of the allotted time.

The leader of that class closed his Bible with a sigh, feeling that he had tried in vain to hinge the lesson upon what he considered the most important points. But God makes no mistakes: he is the Teacher of teachers.

If Mr. Dunham had run the minds of his class in that nice little groove he had prepared so smoothly and carefully, if he had

pressed home those points he so fully intended to, Warner Blakeslee would never have been there again. The Lord himself had pressed more than one truth home to his heart lately, and the morning sermon had impressed him deeply: he would not forget it.

But with the Bible he had very little acquaintance. He knew it as the foundation of the Christian religion, a book which should unquestionably be in every house; he would probably have been greatly shocked if he had been told how many families there were in the city destitute of it, and he would have given a liberal contribution for their supply; but he would have been unable to tell, if you had asked him, whether there had ever been one in his own room at home, or not.

But here he saw, with surprise, shrewd, clear-headed men, for whom in business life

he entertained most profound respect, as familiar and well posted in their Bibles as they would be to-morrow in the market-reports. Here was an eloquent prophecy, like a bugle's note, quoted from memory, in clear ringing tones, by a man whose extensive dealings he would almost have supposed would have absorbed the whole seven days of the week; and its fulfilment in the Messiah found quickly, and read in reverent tones, by a jolly grocer whose jokes were the life of the street. And these men were all in earnest: he had never seen them more so.

The passages which they quoted, with one or two exceptions, were as new and fresh to Warner as if the book were just issued; and he marvelled much at their fitness and their depth of meaning. Some of them were so fastened in his memory, that months after he could repeat them without ever having seen them.

Genie saw, without asking, that he had not been bored, at any rate; and walked in demure silence at his left side, while Mr. Dennison walked at his right for a few blocks.

At the crossing of Pearl Street they met Beulah with her sister Jessie. Genie saw them at some distance, and knew by Beulah's nod, and turning to Jessie, that they, too, had been observed and recognized; but her brother, she fancied, had not seen them until they were close upon them. Beulah would gladly have stopped for a little chat, but Warner lifted his hat with a brief "Good-morning, ladies," and they passed. How very pretty and sweet Miss Jessie looked with the white plumes just touching her golden hair, and the pretty color rising in her face! Genie felt tempted to apply her own small fingers to this miserable tangle, but one glance into her brother's face told

her she had better not. Never mind: wasn't this included in the good things she asked for him every day? and Genie's simple faith was growing stronger day by day.

The lovely morning did not insure a pleasant day: the late afternoon and evening were wild and stormy.

When Genie came down from her one quiet Sunday hour in her own room, it was quite dark: the wind rattled the shutters; and Warner at the corner window gazed drearily out and in, while Mr. Blakeslee yawned, and drew nearer the stove. Genie came in from the dining-room, with the large lamp which she placed on the stand, stirred the fire, and opened the front doors of the stove, so that the bright blaze leaping and dancing added cheeriness to warmth; and then flitting out again she came with a dish of tempting apples, and another of nuts which she had cracked the day before. The three-o'clock

dinner gave an additional hour to the sab bath evening, and Genie meant it should not be a weariness.

Warner, watching her unobserved from his corner, somehow associated all the brightness and the cheeriness with her presence; and perhaps his father had something of the same feeling, for his eyes followed her movements, as she drew the curtains, with a look of unusual content. They drew nearer together, and regaled themselves with the refreshments which she had provided.

Genie was soon satisfied; and, opening the organ, she sang the last piece which they had sung in Sunday school that day. She was gaining every day in the comfortable feeling of knowing what they liked, the want of which made her so timid and distrustful at first. This was followed by the opening piece; and, before she had finished the first verse, Warner threw aside his last

nut-shells, and joined her. Then they took the Gospel Hymns, sometimes Warner selecting, sometimes Genie. The book always opened of itself to —

"What a friend we have in Jesus!"

Warner could not tell what made him say after they had finished it, —

"This seems true to you, Genie."

"It is true," she said, raising her full gaze to his.

Taking at the last from the bottom of the pile an old note-book, she placed it in the rack, and they sang, —

"Jesus, I my cross have taken."

When she closed the instrument Mr. Blakeslee asked pleasantly, "if they were going to pass round the hat." She turned her beaming face toward him.

"No: it is a gratuitous entertainment, without money or price, which we furnish for a select audience."

Genie had more than one special favor to return thanks for that night. It was the first evening Warner had spent with her since this shadow came over him; and both the morning and evening were cause of rejoicing.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE meetings were still continued in Mr. Hutchieson's church every evening. Genie was mentally planning and hoping and waiting. Monday evening her father and Warner were busy all the evening over letters and accounts, concerning some business transactions in Buffalo which were not satisfactory.

The next evening Warner did not go up stairs after tea, and Genie ventured to prefer a request that he would go to church with her.

He never had been with her a week-even-

ing, and was rather astonished, having a vague idea that it was a good deal to go to church on Sunday when it was pleasant, but to go on any other evening could only be expected of church-members.

But he was getting to like his little sister very much. It was a rare thing for her to prefer any request, and he could not find it in his heart to deny her.

He had an indefinite idea of seeing the deacons, a few eminent Christian ladies, and the older Sunday-school scholars; and that every one would wonder what brought him.

They were a little late, and the church was so crowded it was with difficulty they obtained seats; and he was surprised to see that the business men, young and old, whom he met on the streets, many of them no more Christians than himself, made up a large proportion of the congregation.

A stranger filled the pulpit this evening;

but his address was faithful and pointed, and fixed the attention of the large audience. Genie's prayers went with it; and, as she saw Mr. Hutchieson's glance resting upon her brother, she felt that her prayer would not ascend alone. When they came from the meeting, Warner seemed silent and thoughtful; and Genie, remembering Beulah's "Don't talk to me," was silent too.

The next day he had taken a severe cold, which confined him to the house for several days, and threatened lung-fever. Genie was greatly alarmed, and wished that her mother were at home. She racked her brain for the usual remedies in such cases, and applied them with unwearied faithfulness and tenderness. Thursday evening and Friday his throat was very sore. It was one of Mrs. Harty's days; and Warner pleaded, —

"Leave the kitchen to her, Genie: you can't be in more than one place at a time;" and Genie did so, as far as possible.

Beulah came in Thursday, and twice on Friday, on her way home from school. Her merry chatter, though addressed to Genie, entertained Warner as much.

"Oh, dear!" she said, listening to the incessant music of the sleigh-bells, "the sleighing must be lovely. If anybody should ask *me* to ride, I am sure *I* should not refuse;" and she gazed out the window with a very innocent face.

"Why, who did?" said Genie.

"Jessie. Mr. Lester came last evening with just the loveliest turn-out; but Jessie declined squarely, and he was so disappointed! If he had only had the good taste to ask me — but he hadn't."

Genie thought it certainly was not good taste in Beulah to tell this. She was afraid, too, that her talking so much might weary Warner; but when she turned to him he really looked brighter.

When Beulah was going away she said with her simple freedom, —

"But you will be better soon, for we will pray for you. Genie always does, I know, and I will too."

Genie was a little startled. She was bending over him, bathing his throat. He opened his eyes, and looked straight into the tearful brown ones.

"I knew it," he whispered, and closed his eyes again.

Saturday he was much better; and Sunday he declared himself quite well, and able to accompany her to church. Genie asked her father if he would not go with them; but he declined, though not unkindly.

The sermon this morning was appropriate for the new year, as last sabbath's had been for the old. After the service Warner found his way again to the Bible-class.

At night, when Genie sat down to think,

she felt hopeful and encouraged. Surely God was leading Warner, slowly it seemed sometimes, but how different he was now from what he was two months ago! It seemed to her that it was very little of it her work. But the one who only brings the boards and nails together does as needful a part of the work as he who fastens them securely. Looking afar off for the great work, to which God perhaps will never call us, we quite overlook the little shining opportunities which lie at our hand, which, linked together, might form the golden chain to draw those we love to the Master's feet.

"That Buffalo business" was still a source of much uneasiness.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Blakeslee over the Monday mail, "that we shall never straighten this thing out without one of us going down there."

"That is just what I think," said Warner; "and the sooner the better."

Mr. Blakeslee looked relieved.

"When could you go?"

"Why, if Tenbrook comes in this afternoon, as he agreed, I will go in the morning."

"You will have your hands full this afternoon, then. There is that matter of Donaldson's too."

"Yes; but I think I can manage it;" and they hurried through their dinner, and left the table.

Genie had heard with a sinking heart. She asked no questions, for she could not. She put down her cup, and sat staring after them; but Warner came back from the hall, leaving his father to go on alone.

"Why, Genie," he said, when he saw how pale she was, "what is the matter?"

"How long will you be gone?" she asked, speaking very low, and trying hard not to cry.

"That is the worst of it. I cannot tell any thing about it. I may be home in a couple of days, and it may take a month. Will you miss me very much, little sister?" he said tenderly, laying his hand on her head.

"O Warner!" and it was of no use to try to keep back the tears now.

He stroked her hair gently a few moments, and then she remembered.

"I am keeping you here when you have so much to do. You must go right away."

"I am afraid I must, but promise me not to cry any more. I am afraid this long face will come into my figures, and foot them up too heavily."

"I can't promise that," she said, looking up through her tears; "but I will try, for I must be busy too. What clothes do you want to take?"

"I don't know. You may lay them all

out on the bed if you have time, and I can put what I want in a satchel to-night."

Genie went quickly to her work, while she pondered over many things in her heart. If Warner went away, entirely among strangers, stopping in a hotel, engrossed in a perplexing business, would he not put away and forget the serious thoughts which she felt sure he had often now?

Her heart went out to God with a great longing. And, oh, if he would only show her something that she could do for him there! If she only knew one good Christian in Buffalo! there must be so many in that large city. If only one could come to him at night when business was over, when he would be lonely, too, she was sure, and say, "Come with us, and we will do you good"!

When we put our hand in God's, day by day, asking him to lead and let us follow just where he leads, he often shapes our

eager hopes and desires into plans for his own glory and the good we seek. It was so now. Genie saw only the first step. She would go and tell Mr. Hutchieson this great longing. Perhaps he had friends there, or perhaps — she hardly knew what: only it seemed like sending this beloved member of her household away into the darkness, and she could not.

As soon as she could find leisure, she hurried out. She knew Mr. Hutchieson was rarely at home in the afternoon, and if he were out she could not tell all this of her brother to any one else. But she saw him, not a block from her home, and he turned and went back with her. Her trouble, her eager desires, were soon told; and Mr. Hutchieson listened thoughtfully.

"It is a good thought," he said; "I wish I could help you carry it out: but I have never stopped in Buffalo. I do not know

that I have a single acquaintance in that city."

Genie's countenance fell.

"Stay," he said, a sudden thought lighting up his face: "Dennison was a Buffalo man: he knows your brother well too. It is the very thing. Dennison's heart is always warm for the Lord's work. My child," he said earnestly, "I believe this thing is of the Lord. I will go with you to the bank; or would you rather," for he saw how painfully Genie's color rose, "that I should see Dennison for you?"

"Yes, sir, if you will."

"I will attend to it at once."

Genie thanked him warmly, and he went out; and she laid aside her cloak and hat, and took up her home duties.

An hour after, Warner called at the bank, and thought it a pleasant *chance* that Dennison himself was in.

"Halloo, Blakeslee! I just saw your father, and he tells me you are off for Buffalo."

"Yes, in the morning."

"Well, it is a good place to go to. It is my old home. Where shall you stop?"

"At the ———, I think. I was detained in passing through two years ago, and found myself well cared for there."

"It is a good house. Let me give you some letters of introduction though. If you should be detained there some time, I think I can help a little to make your stay agreeable."

Warner would be glad of them, and said so.

Mr. Dennison went to the desk for a few moments, and returned with three letters.

"There," he said, "those are the three best friends I have in the world; and you will be doing me a favor by calling upon them at your earliest convenience."

Warner thanked him, and took his leave.

At the tea-table Mr. Blakeslee said, —

"Dennison called to see you while you were out."

Genie put down her cup hurriedly.

"So he told me; he gave me several letters of introduction. I had forgotten that he came from Buffalo."

"Did he?"

And the conversation changed to other business matters, but the little sister's heart was glowing with thankfulness.

They both left the house as soon as they had finished their supper. Many things were yet to be attended to; but Warner said kindly to Genie, looking at his watch, —

"I will be home just as early as I can; maybe not till late, but it will be just as soon as I get through."

Genie thanked him with a smile, and hoped he did not see that her eyes were full.

He came in a little earlier than she expected. How bright and cheery and homelike the room looked as he came in from the cold and darkness! He wondered at himself, that he should feel so much this going away for a brief business trip. He did not use to care very much where he was, if he were only left to himself.

Genie came forward to meet him; and, as he was about laying off his overcoat, she stopped him, and said with a little effort, —

"Warner, isn't there some one else? isn't there one place where you would like to call before you go away? I will sit up and wait for you."

He did not understand when she first began; then his face darkened, and he said, —

"No, I think not."

He went to the hall with his overcoat; and then returning to the cosey fire and the easy-chair, he said more lightly, "Not

another place, Genie. I don't think there is any one in all the world that cares three straws whether I go or come, but this little sister."

"Then I will be all the world," she answered in the same tone.

They talked for a few moments of her mother's last letter, of the business which took him away, which he hoped when on the ground might wear a better look, and be more easily adjusted.

She noticed that he passed his hand often over his forehead, and asked if his head ached.

"A little. I am unusually tired. I am afraid my kind nursing and petting last week spoiled me. If I should be sick I shall telegraph immediately for you. Could you leave?"

She was looking into the fire, and took it all seriously.

"Yes, I think so. I could get Mrs. Harty to come and stay, if I were needed more there. You must certainly send for me if there is any thing the matter."

She looked so small in her low chair, that the matronly air was a little amusing; but he repressed the smile which would have hurt her, and said, —

"Oh! I am only tired: I have been running like an express-train all the afternoon. I will rest a little on the lounge if you will sing to me."

At first he hummed the airs with her, then he came to her side to join his voice with hers.

"Now I really must go and put up my traps," he said, as the clock struck.

"One more, please, for the last; just this one," and she turned with trembling fingers to —

"I am praying for you."

They had never sung it together: he had never heard it before. He ran over the bass in the first verse, and then left it entirely to her. Her voice trembled a little, but it was very clear and sweet. The choice was no accident: she meant it to say to him all she wanted to, but could not; and he understood it. When the last note died away he bent over, and kissed her, with a low "Thank you;" and she was sure there were tears in his eyes too.

He found his clothes neatly folded, and his satchel ready. She had taken a Bible, a very unused one, from his book-shelves, and laid it on the clothes which would be most sure to go. He would certainly not have taken it of himself, but he would not pain Genie by putting it aside; and so for the first time in his life he travelled with a Bible in his satchel.

CHAPTER XIV.

WARNER reached Buffalo the next morning after leaving home. All the day was taken up with the business which had brought him there. But after the early evening closed in he soon grew tired of the public rooms, and was glad, after his supper, to take the evening paper and retire to his own rooms. The local and current news were soon despatched: there was nothing else in the room to read, and there was still a long evening before him, with nothing to do. He yawned, wished he had presented his letters of introduction,

then tilted his chair back, and closed his eyes.

If Genie could have looked into his heart then, she would have been greatly encouraged. A pleasant picture came before him of the cheery sitting-room at home, and the little sister in her low chair before the fire; and with the picture, somehow, came the soft, sweet refrain, —

"For you I am praying,
I am praying for you."

He could only recall fragments of the hymn: —

"I have a Saviour, he's pleading in glory;"
"And, oh that my Saviour were your Saviour too!"
"A hope for eternity, blessed and true;"
"But, oh, that he'd let me bring you with me too!"

He could not remember any verse connectedly, but over and over again came that precious assurance, —

"For you I am praying,
For you I am praying,
For you I am praying, —
I am praying for you."

A half-hour passed away, and then a servant brought a card to his room, "Sargent Dennison." He had not yet presented his letters of introduction, but this was the address of one of them.

The gentleman who followed his card was some years younger than Mr. Ross Dennison, but much resembling him.

"I have just received a letter from my brother," he said after the first greetings: "he said a friend of his was stopping here, so I have anticipated the letter of introduction which he wrote he had given you."

If Blakeslee could have looked into the letter which the gentleman still held in his hand, he might have read, after kindly commending the stranger to his courtesy:

"Above all, Sargent, win him for Christ. The Lord is with us: make Blakeslee to know by blessed experience that he is in Buffalo too."

Mr. Dennison had written that letter before Warner called at the bank, with his warm heart full of the story which his pastor had just told him of the little praying sister.

Mr. Sargent Dennison's frank, off-hand courtesy made quick way with Warner's reticence, and the young men were soon in cordial conversation.

After a time Mr. Dennison consulted his watch.

"If you have no engagement for the evening, Mr. Blakeslee, come with me. We are having very interesting meetings at our hall, the Young Men's Christian Association's. If we go now we shall find good seats, which I would not dare promise you a half-hour from now."

Mr. Blakeslee was not particularly desirous for the meeting; but what to do with the next two hours had been rather a formidable problem, and the Gospel Hymns which peeped from the gentleman's pocket added an unconscious attraction with their home associations. He went, and so passed his first evening in Buffalo.

It was a long day, and longer evening, to Genie. She missed Warner so much at the table, not for what he said, for that was very little; but for a long time now he had such a quick, kind way of looking towards her, and particularly if there were any little annoyance. It gave her such an assurance of his sympathy, and the comfort, that, whether he spoke or not, he was at her side, and never forgot her.

But, when evening came, she tried to put her own feeling aside, and make herself bright and pleasant; for in his way Mr.

Blakeslee missed his son quite as much as Genie did.

Nothing had gone quite right at the mills without him. Though nominally performing the duties of cashier and bookkeeper, he had a general surveillance of all the financial part of the business. The man advanced to his desk during his absence was steady and reliable, and would do as well as any supply could perhaps; but already during this first day he had seemed to Mr. Blakeslee like only a pair of hands without a head, and he came home at night fretted and worried.

Genie's sources of entertainment for her father were not many or varied; but talking of Warner and his journey she at last beguiled him into conversation, and he was reminded of a rather funny adventure which he met with once in Buffalo, and he told it over to Genie; and that made Genie think of Beulah's father oversleeping on his last trip,

and being carried fifty miles out of his way, and the comical way in which he told it. And so, though there was nothing wise or brilliant said, they each, in their own way, felt the other's loss, and tried to make up for it; and the little effort had its own reward: the evening was made good and pleasant. And the evenings and the mornings make these last days, as they did the first.

Beulah made a flying call on her way to school; and, reporting Genie's loneliness, she coaxed Jessie into going down with her for a little while after tea. They staid until it was time for Mr. Blakeslee's return, kindly promising to repeat the visit soon. Genie followed Miss Jessie out with a little sigh: she was so sweet, how could any one be angry with her? And Genie shrewdly fancied more than once that Warner was mistaken in saying that "his little sister was

the only one who cared three straws whether he went or came."

Beulah came in one morning for "a good talk," having started for school an hour earlier because she knew Genie could not spare her the time at noon.

"Genie, do you think I am fit to join the church?" she said. "That is what I came to talk about. It is communion in our church next sabbath, and I have been thinking so much about it;" and she came close to Genie, and took hold of her hand. "I'm not good for any thing, I know; but Jesus loves me, and I know I love him." And the rosy face, which had been clouded, lighted all over.

"I don't think I am wise enough to advise any one, Beulah dear; but if Jesus loves you, and you know you love him, and he has told us to do this, it seems to me that is enough. You mean to belong to him

always, anyway, don't you, whether you join the church, or not?"

"Yes, always," said Beulah fervently.

"And Jesus told us to take the sacrament in remembrance of him; and in joining the church we say to all that we are on the Lord's side. I wish you could talk with mother."

Genie had spoken slowly, trying to recall just what her mother had said to her a little more than a year ago, when she had come, the youngest of a score who had added themselves unto the Lord.

Beulah was turning her mitten carefully wrong side out; there was something else, and she wiped away the fast-gathering tears before she spoke again.

"Jessie was the first one who spoke to me about it. She came last Sunday after church, when I was alone thinking about it; and she had been crying, too; and she put

her arms around me, and said, 'Beulah dear, oughtn't you to be with those next Sunday?' And when I said I was afraid I wasn't fit, and shouldn't hold out well, she said, 'But you are a child of God, I am sure, dear;' and then she held her Bible, and pointed for me to read, 'No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand,' and said, 'Isn't this promise to you?' I said, 'O Jessie, if you could only go with me!' And when I looked at her she looked pale and tired, and her eyes were full of tears; but she shook her head, and said, 'I wish I could, but you must not let any one keep you back.'"

Beulah's story was broken with many sobs and tears.

"I want to go, and I want to wait for Jessie. Would the Lord care?"

"Ask him," said Genie: "ask him to show you just what you shall do; I don't know."

"Pray for my dear Jessie," she said pleadingly, as she gathered up her books, and went on her way.

That evening brought an unexpected pleasure to Genie in the shape of a long letter from Warner. She had not ventured to ask him to write to her particularly: his absence was so uncertain, and his time was to be so occupied, she was afraid he might think such a request foolish and unreasonable; and the pleasure was all the greater now that it was not because she had asked him.

Like all men of his type, he expressed himself with much greater ease and freedom with his pen than with his tongue. The letters of such men are almost always an unexpected and delightful revelation, and it was so to Genie.

He seemed to have noticed and remembered every thing which could have any in-

terest for his sister, — little adventures by the way; his impressions of the city, of his hotel; Sargent Dennison's call; the meeting which he attended with him; who spoke, and what they sang; of his invitation to dinner at Mr. Dennison's pleasant home, of his nice little wife and child; and of how Sargent Dennison was like the Mr. Dennison she knew, only still more so, more earnest, more energetic. His other two letters of introduction had also brought him pleasant acquaintances, so that he had no cause to mope, though he would give more for a quiet evening at home with his little sister than any thing he could think of then. She must take good care of herself. He had realized, while he was sick, how many steps her patient little feet took in the course of the day, and what a right motherly care she had over her household, but he wished her cares were fewer. He inquired very kindly

after her mother, remembering it was the day her weekly letter was due; and added here, —

"I think, from what father says of grandmother's health, that it will not be long before aunt Mary will be a permanent member of our family. And I want to tell you, it will be no intrusion, but a real acquisition for us all. I have not seen her for twelve years. I was just about your age, Genie; but, as I remember her, I am sure you would love her. She is just one of your kind, as I imagine my little sister might be if twenty years of weary suffering and patient waiting should be given to her — which God forbid! I only wanted to give you a pleasant thought of aunt Mary's coming among us, which, after all, may not be soon."

Genie read her letter twice before she folded it. Why, he would hardly have talked that much to her in months. It seemed, just then, almost worth while to have him away from her, to get such a letter;

and he said he would write to her often, if she proved as faithful a correspondent to her brother as to her mother.

Only one thing spoiled her pleasure in the letter. He said there was no prospect of his immediate return. Matters were worse than he expected, and it was well that he came when he did.

CHAPTER XV.

EVERY reference to aunt Mary in Mrs. Blakeslee's letters had a new interest for Genie after what Warner had said.

"You write of *poor* aunt Mary," she said in her last letter; "but you will not think of her so, when you come to know and love her. You want to hear all about her, and I have meant to write of her every time; but I have been so interrupted that my letters have necessarily been very short, too short to say half I wanted. She is not at all like her brother [but this last had been carefully scratched, and Genie felt almost sorry that she could read it when her mother had not meant she should]. I presume she was called very pretty when she was young; but I do

not think her face could have been half so attractive then as it is now, it is so delicate and pure. I say to myself often, when I look at her, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' She has had trials and sufferings, and long years of close confinement to a petty round of cares, such as imbitter and sour other lives, and now of late, added to this, such physical suffering that we have marvelled how the slender frame has borne it. Now I know you are filling in my outlines with a patient resignation, a meek silent endurance, until the Master sends release. There is all that, but that is not the half. She is the brightest, cheeriest person about the house. I go to her for rest when I am tired, for comfort when I am down-hearted, and for entertainment and instruction always. For seventeen years her mother has been her constant care. Society and friends, except the little circle who come to her in her seclusion, have been cheerfully given up; and yet you cannot look upon her as one who has sustained losses. God seems to have more than made up for any thing he may have denied her. In all these quiet years she has so stored her mind, and cultivated her fine talents, that I think she is really the most gifted

lady I have ever met; and through it all, and over all, shines her crowning grace, her childlike, every-day trust in God."

"What a beautiful picture!" thought Genie; "and Warner could imagine *me* like this!"

The letter went on, —

"I have never seen any one whom I would like so much to have for a companion for myself and my precious daughter as Mary Blakeslee.

"She tells me so many pleasant stories of her own and John's early life; of how they loved each other, and how inseparable they were until he left his native village; and even then, what holidays his visits were, and how she dated every thing forward or back from these seasons. I think often how happy they will be to live these old times over. I have regretted sometimes that I did not return at once with both mother and Mary last fall. Mother could have borne it then, and John could have had the comfort of having her with him all these last days; but it would be impossible now, and perhaps it would

have been hazardous for Mary then. We will leave it all in God's good hands."

Genie deliberated a few moments, and then she read the letter aloud to her father. When she looked up, his head was bowed upon his bosom, and the tears were slowly trickling down his cheeks. She said nothing, but went quietly about her evening work.

"Let me take that letter, child," he said when she came in. She went to her basket for it, glad that he could not see her face. That one little sentence which her mother had scratched out! But his sight was not very clear, and she trusted that he might not notice the words; at any rate, ready obedience was her part, and she placed the letter in his hand.

Later in the evening he seemed inclined to talk of his mother and sister, and Genie listened eagerly. At last he rose, and walked the floor.

"If Warner were only at home, I would go and see mother. I thought I couldn't get away before; but I believe Warner is worth half a dozen of the rest of us at the mills. Every thing goes like clockwork when he is at his post."

Genie could well believe this; but she was surprised and pleased to hear it from his father. Warner had been away a week now, the longest week since her mother went away to Genie, and not shorter to Mr. Blakeslee, who fancied every thing went wrong without his son.

Afterward he said musingly, —

"It is more than seven years since I saw mother and Mary. I didn't think it had been so long." He said no more, and Genie rightly judged he would rather be left to his own thoughts; until, as she was putting things in order to retire, he said, —

"Genie, sing me that old hymn again: it was always mother's hymn."

That was why he had kept a place for it in his heart all these years, then; and Genie's grew tender and pitiful while she sang.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. BLAKESLEE came home one day attended by a rather remarkable specimen of a boy. Dinner had been waiting a long time; it often did now: and Mr. Blakeslee sat down at once, saying as he did so, —

"Put on another plate for this boy, Genie: we must hurry back."

Genie did so; but the lad hesitated, and looked at his dirty hands. She saw, and said kindly, —

"Do you want to wash? Come, and I will give you some water."

Before he returned to the table Mr. Blakeslee explained, —

"A new mill-boy I hired this morning. I presume he won't be of much use, but we are short of help. He is just a tramp; so you will have to find a place for him here somewhere, and keep your eye on him."

Not a very promising introduction certainly, not a very agreeable guest at the family table. And down in her heart Genie felt cross at this unceremonious addition to her household.

"None of the mill-boys had ever boarded in the house when mother was at home," she said to herself with an aggrieved air.

She had placed his plate from instinct on the opposite side from where Warner used to sit; and now she waited with a little frown on her forehead, and lips tightly compressed.

"Why don't he come?" she thought pettishly. "I wonder what time I shall get my work done."

It has never been found conducive to a housekeeper's good humor to keep her dinner waiting until it is half spoiled, and Genie was proving herself no exception. Looking up impatiently, she saw the boy standing in the door, his freckled face crimson, and his hands nervously fumbling his old cap: he had heard all her father's last words.

Her mother used often to say, "If you are in doubt about any thing, try it by the Golden Rule: would *you* like it?" It came to Genie now: he was strange and awkward, and only a boy, yet announced as a suspicious character at the very outset. *She* would have thought that very hard. Her face, which the boy was furtively watching, changed as quickly as her thought; and with a re-assuring smile she pointed to the vacant seat, and Mr. Blakeslee filled his plate. The master of the house had finished before the

hungry boy was half satisfied: he looked regretfully at the goodly portion still on his plate, but laid down his knife and fork.

"I maun gang noo," he said, looking at Genie.

"What!" said Mr. Blakeslee in a loud, gruff tone.

The boy's face grew red again, and he looked stupid and frightened. But Genie and Beulah had read "Alec Forbes" together not long before, and had exercised themselves considerably in Scottish dialect: so she bethought herself quickly.

"He said he must go now," she said, "but he can finish his dinner first?"

The lad looked wonderingly at her, relieved and grateful.

"Why, eat all you want, Davie. Can you find your own way to the mills?"

The boy nodded, his mouth too full to admit of any other reply.

Genie placed his pie before him, and went to her work in the kitchen. Remembering what her father had said, and feeling that she was responsible, she left the door open between, lest the spoons and forks should disappear; but she felt glad that Davie was too engrossed with his dinner to notice the precaution. When he had finished, he seized his hat, and darted from the house.

Genie watched him from the window: he was a curious picture. His head was large, and the thin light hair, which was so long it touched his coat, scarcely covered it. He had outgrown and reached beyond his shabby clothes at every point; and his long neck stretched forward more and more, as if impatient of the slow progress of his shambling, clumsy feet.

He looked like a tough problem. But her part of it just now was to provide accommodations for him, not in either of the nice

guest-chambers certainly; still less would she have put him in Warner's room, though she rather hoped he was not to be a permanent fixture, but only a temporary supply to fill a vacancy. In all the ample house there seemed no provision to meet this particular demand. But Genie rather enjoyed emergencies. She had the happy faculty of contrivance which is said to be as good as a sixth sense. And, by the time her dishes were washed, her plan had taken shape, and spread itself out delightfully.

There was a small store-room between Warner's room and the garret, filled now partly with the unused bedding, which she could pack away in the house clothes-press, and partly with old trunks: these she could not carry to the adjoining garret, — no, but she could drag them.

In an hour the room was empty, swept and dusted: then her ingenuity had full

exercise. A wide old lounge-frame came back over the same road that the trunks had travelled, and did duty with a supply of comfortable bedding as a bed. A castaway carpet, with the cutting out a hole and adding a piece, furnished a length which covered the space in front of the bed. An old skirt of hers made a curtain for the window; and, as the material was ample, she looped and draped it in a style of her own, which was really artistic.

At just this stage of the work Beulah came, — just what Genie had been wishing for; and in less than five minutes the plans had been fully explained, and the two girls were dragging out a dry-goods box, the top of which was to be padded with an old quilt, and then the whole covered with the back breadths of a gay chintz wrapper.

Beulah's little round fists were better at driving tacks than Genie's: so she undertook

this job, while Genie drafted a chair from the kitchen, a small glass from the back entry where no one used it, and one picture ("Don't forget the æsthetics," Beulah had said) from her own room. The chintz toilet-stand, when Beulah had finished it, and it was covered with a tidy, was graceful and pretty. It needed a wash-bowl and pitcher, at least: it certainly would not be convenient or comfortable for him to always come to the kitchen to wash. Genie would not borrow them from one of the spare rooms to put here; but she could use those herself, and put her own here.

Beulah finished by driving in some strong nails for his clothes; and then standing in the door, contemplating their work, she said, —

"'A bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick,' you remember: we have more than the prophet's chamber held."

"Oh! but you haven't seen our Davie;" and the recollection sent Genie, tired as she was, off into a hysterical fit of laughing, for which she reproached herself a minute after.

Leaving the back door of Davie's room open, they passed into Warner's room, Genie bolting the door on that side; and then they sat down close to the stove-pipe, and had one of their "good talks."

When they went down stairs, Davie sat on a chair nearest the outer door, his hat in his hand. He rose as the girls came in, and stood awkwardly.

"You found your way, Davie? Come to the fire," Genie said pleasantly, as they passed through the room. Her busy afternoon's work had given her an interest in its object.

"What a forlorn-looking waif!" said Beulah, when the door was closed.

"Genie," she said suddenly, "perhaps all

the good that boy ever gets is to come through you. You are 'the lady of the manor:' here is another responsibility for you." She finished half laughing and half in earnest.

But it came back to Genie afterwards, while she laid the table for supper. Did not the holy law include the servants, and the stranger within the gates in the household?

Mr. Blakeslee went back to the mill-office immediately after supper, saying to Genie as he passed out, that she could "set Davie at the chores."

She was rather doubtful about his ability to comprehend readily, and did not like the prospect before her. But when she had piled up her dishes, she found Davie had already filled the wood-box, and was awaiting orders.

"A gude hantle; yo'd noo fire a' thot the nicht," he said, surveying the full box with satisfaction.

"No, that will last for to-morrow."

He was helpful and willing to work; not always understanding, but then his blank look, and "I dinna ken," were good-natured and patient.

Genie tried to imagine just what her mother would do and say in this case. The duties and requirements of the "lady of the manor" in relation to servants in the house were not very clear, inasmuch as they had never kept any, her mother preferring to do their own work. And it was annoying, for him to stand a few feet from her, staring, and waiting for something to do.

She went to his little room before she had settled herself for the evening, to see that it was all right, and left a small night-lamp and a Testament.

"Davie," she said, "I have left a lamp turned down in your room, so that you can go to bed whenever you like. Here is the

door, and you will find your room by the light."

"Maun I gang richt noo?"

Genie thought a moment to interpret.

"No: you can go when you like."

She left a lamp in the kitchen; but Davie innocently followed her to the sitting-room, and huddled himself into the farthest corner.

How she missed her brother at evening! her thoughts and prayers went out after him constantly. It was her habit to write in "mother's journal" every evening at this time, unless father or Warner were in. But even this pleasant occupation could never quite banish her fears: street noises made her start and tremble. To-night a party of rowdies went by, making the air hideous with their drunken shouts and songs. Genie glanced nervously at the door; but, as she did so, her eyes met the great watchful eyes

of the strange boy, whose presence she had almost forgotten; and she went back to her writing, with the sense of protection which one feels with a faithful dog at hand. He sat there until Mr. Blakeslee came in, then he rose.

"Wad there be ony thing mair yoursel' or the bonny leddy the nicht?"

"What *are* you talking about?"

His great eyes turned to Genie.

"The missie kens."

"Have you any thing more for him to do? he wants to know. I haven't."

"No; but he might as well talk Spanish."

Davie went out with a quiet "Weel."

A half-hour after, Mr. Blakeslee wanted a file of papers from Warner's desk, and Genie went to fetch them. A noise from the adjoining room attracted her attention, and she paused to listen. It was not singing, rather a low crooning; but, as she drew nearer, she heard distinctly, —

"For thou, O Lord! art high above
All things on earth that are:
Above all other gods thou art
Exalted very far.
Hate ill, all ye that love the Lord.
His saints' souls keepeth he;
And from the hands of wicked men
He sets them safe and free.
For all those that be righteous,
Sown is a joyful light;
And gladness sown is for all those
That are in heart upright.
Ye righteous, in the Lord rejoice;
Express your thankfulness,
When ye into your memory
Do call his holiness."

The quaint old version of the precious psalm was new to Genie, and on Davie's broad Scotch tongue it had the ring of the days of the Covenanters. She waited in reverent silence until he had finished, and then stole softly down the stairs. She

remembered the legend of St. Christopher. Perhaps here in this homely guise was one of the Lord's pilgrims. Could she help him on his way?

The next day she was as kind and careful not to wound the feelings of the odd, ungainly serving-boy, as she would have been for any gentleman. A true lady is as much a lady in her kitchen as in her parlor.

Mr. Blakeslee's brusque orders seemed to confuse him, and make him more stupid and Scotchy than ever. His great eyes turned with a helpless stare to Genie, and he seemed to put "the little leddy" always between himself and the formidable master of the house. And in return, when he was in the house, he missed no opportunity of serving or relieving her. "As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress," so Davie's eyes followed Genie; and the clumsy, patient feet journeyed from cellar to

garret, anticipating her needs, and at night he took the same place in the corner.

When Mr. Blakeslee again reminded her that "the boy might be light-fingered," she told him what she had heard from his room. He said nothing, but she saw that the report had its effect: he never watched him suspiciously afterward.

By and by Genie drew Davy's story from him. He was not quite thirteen years old, and had come from Scotland, at his mother's death, only a year ago, to find a home with his uncle, his mother's brother, living twenty miles from the city. But his uncle died three months ago; and his wife, who was not a Scotchwoman, and had six children of her own, had, it would seem, determined not to carry out her husband's plan for the little nephew, and resolved to send him to the poorhouse. Davie learned of this; and thinking, as he said in his quaint way, "he

couldna do wur his ain sel'," he told his aunt so, and she offered no opposition. His own father had been a miller, and so he naturally, in looking for work, found his way to the mills; and he had not told his story, because no one had asked him. Indeed, no one less patient than Genie could have interpreted it, as it came from his tongue.

She found, from further conversation with him, that his love for the Psalms was more because they spoke to him of "mither" than because they spoke of God. But the poor, sore, homesick little heart was hungering after him, his "mither's Lord;" and Genie's simple, earnest teachings were like seed dropped upon ground well watered and prepared. She thanked the Lord with joyful heart that she had been permitted to guide this little pilgrim to his feet. The last and least of her household had been the first gathered into the fold, yet she did

not despond for the others; she had gone forth weeping often, bearing precious seed, and God's promise was sure, — the sheaves should follow when the glad reaping-time came.

She had had another letter from Warner: it was just as kind, just as entertaining, as the other, and yet he seemed to have said nothing about himself; and she could not help feeling disappointed, for what was all Buffalo to her, compared with Warner?

To his father his report of business matters was better than Mr. Blakeslee had dared to expect, and he was greatly relieved.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. BLAKESLEE'S reports grew less and less hopeful with regard to the aged mother. Mary had improved rapidly of late; was nearly well, though she would perhaps never be strong again.

Genie saw that her father was much depressed, and in many little ways discerned by watchful tenderness she strove to express her unspoken sympathy; and that he felt and appreciated it, he manifested in his own way by more and more requiring her constant presence with him, and little personal attentions and services from her hands.

It was a great delight to Genie to feel that he did not like to have her out of his sight; and she was never so tired but that she was glad to be called upon to do something for father. Three months ago they were barely conscious of each other's existence, and she had been simply careful not to be in his way to trouble or annoy him. Could she have believed then that she would watch for his coming, and see his tired face lighten as it did now when he saw her? And still there was "more to follow." Genie grew more and more assured of this as she pleaded for him at the throne of grace: she could almost see how God's hand was leading him.

Sabbath morning he had accompanied her to church; in the evening he sat a long time turning over the leaves of her mother's Bible: looking up, he said deprecatingly, as if so unusual an occupation needed some apology, —

"I was trying to find something mother used to read, about fearing no evil, — 'Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me;' but my eyes trouble me so," and he passed his hand over them.

It was no wonder, for they were dim with tears.

Genie took the Bible, repeating slowly and distinctly as she did so the twenty-third Psalm.

"That's it," he said.

And from Davie's corner only Genie heard, "I ken that."

Opening to the ninety-first Psalm, she read that and the one hundred and third.

"Yes, that too I remember was mother's," he said, looking at her as if it were wonderful how she should have guessed; not knowing how they were Genie's too, and her mother's, how they have been the blessed portion of every saint in all ages, and yet are never less.

He took up his newspaper afterward; but Genie saw all the evening that he was not reading, but seemed lost in troubled, anxious thought.

Monday morning he was unusually pale, and looked as if he had slept little. When breakfast was over, and Davie had gone, he said, pushing his plate far back on the table,—

"I *must* go and see mother. It seemed as if I couldn't possibly leave now, but money isn't every thing [he was just beginning to think so]: I am going if I lose a thousand dollars for it. I don't know about you, sis," and his tone sounded strangely soft and kind. "I hate to leave you this way. I have been thinking Mr. Bates can come and sleep here nights. And do you think your little friend Beulah would come and keep you company?"

"Oh, never mind that, father! Don't

trouble a bit about me. Yes, sir! I think Mrs. Moore would let Beulah come; but if she can't I won't mind, if Mr. Bates will sleep in the house, and Davie is such a help. I shall do nicely. I am glad you are going to see grandmother."

"Warner will not be surprised, I think," Mr. Blakeslee went on more to himself than to Genie. "He wrote last week that in case I was called away Bates could telegraph him any thing that bothered him, and he would keep a look-out over it all. Wonderful what a head that fellow has!"

Genie was wondering whether Warner had any idea of the estimation in which his father held him.

She was half afraid that her father might change his mind before the day was over; but another letter from his wife only confirmed his determination, and hurried his preparations.

So Genie sent another of her household forth with a blessing. Every thing that he would want for his week's absence was carefully made ready, and packed with her own hands, with a little running comment in her thoughts. "Mother will see I have put new bands on these shirts." "Mother will think those new socks did not wear well, for I have darned them 'most all over." And, as she thought how soon he would be with her, a great homesick longing came over her, and she sobbed aloud.

"O mother, mother, when shall I see you again? it has been so long!"

Then there came a vague, half-regretful feeling in her heart, that she was not quite the *little girl* her mother had left, — that she never should be again. Would her mother be glad, or sorry? Was she sorry herself? She seemed to have been troubled about nothing in the old times; but would she go

back there if she could, — go back, and give up her father and brother, and all that made her life so much deeper and broader than the child-life had been? No, in God's name and in his strength she would go forward, leaving the things which were behind, and pressing forward to the things which were before; she and all the dear ones that God had given her would yet tread the higher path together.

She was hoping and praying for great good to her father from this visit. She tried to picture the meeting of the long-separated mother and son; her heart ached as she remembered the long weary years of praying and waiting which had been this mother's portion, and with her whole heart she prayed that the waiting might be ended now, that she might be spared to see her prayers answered, and that before she went the wanderer might come home to his Father's house, to his mother's God.

Mr. Blakeslee left at four o'clock in the morning. He had made the best arrangements he could at the mills; Mr. Bates had promised to stay at the house every night; Beulah was glad to keep Genie company; and he had written fully to Warner, and telegraphed his wife, so that his mother might be prepared for his visit.

He told Genie she need not get up at that unseasonable hour; but nevertheless he neither looked nor spoke any regret at meeting the open fire in the sitting-room, and the little round table drawn near it, with the smoking coffee and nice toast, and Genie's bright "Good-morning," as she warmed the heavy overcoat before the fire.

I am sure he would not have liked to go away without them all; for to the anxious traveller there is a blessing, a God-speed, in such sending.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW Beulah woke the echoes in every nook and corner of the old house, and how they both enjoyed it! They worked and played together; they laughed and sang; they made many and far-reaching plans for the future; they cheered and strengthened each other in faith and love and patience, and they prayed with and for each other. Their "hopes, their aims, were one."

Genie had been counting upon Beulah's help in a little plan for Davie's benefit. His clothes were very worn and shabby. Genie

had mended them all she could, but he held out sturdily against her invitations to church and Sunday school; he was "nae canny for kirk;" and he declined as firmly Mr Blakeslee's offer of money in advance of his wages, to buy what he needed. He spent his Sundays with his little old Bible, quietly content. But Genie thought with Beulah's assistance a respectable suit for Davie might be manufactured out of garments her father and Warner had discarded. Beulah suggested that they look them over immediately after dinner, so that they would be prepared to commence operations as soon as she came home from school.

They were just coming down the stairs with arms full of old clothes, black, brown, and gray, enough to start a second-hand clothing store, when Miss Jessie called. She found she missed her merry little sister sadly.

While all the family petted Beulah, Jessie, more than any of the others, understood her, and brought out the best of her. It was to Jessie she used to go with all her childish troubles, and Jessie's loving sympathy could always bring back the smiles. It was Jessie who helped her with her lessons, mingling play with work so happily, that the child did not find much difference. And as she grew older she unconsciously copied the beautiful sister, who was, beyond every one else in the world, the object of her love and admiration.

But now Beulah, the child of yesterday as it seemed to Jessie, had gone beyond her, had learned first the true wisdom. She led; and Jessie followed, doubting and fearful at first, but soon into the full light of God. A new and sweeter tie bound the sisters now. Beulah had prayerfully decided that she might wait for Jessie, and at the next opportunity they were going together to take the

vows of God upon them in the presence of the people.

The girls greeted her joyfully, spread out their garments and their plans at the same time, and asked her advice, which she kindly gave, and more, — promised to be there precisely at four to assist in the cutting and fitting.

Beulah could not repress her laughter at Davie's odd talk, but she took all the sting from it when she said, —

"Now you may laugh at my English as much as you like, Davie: it is just as odd in some places, you know, as your Scotch, only here we all talk English."

Then she declared she must improve the rare opportunity to learn the Scottish dialect; and she caught the words from his tongue as glibly as a parrot, while at the same time she gave as much as she took, and Davie improved so rapidly that Mr. Blakes-

lee would soon find no difficulty in understanding him.

The new suit progressed rapidly; and when it was finished, and the grateful Davie arrayed in it, the girls surveyed him critically, very proud of their success.

"But, Davie, you really must have your hair cut," said Beulah; and without further ado she took the large shears, and performed the operation herself; and really, now that the scared, hungry look had given place to one of easy content, if not just "bonny," he was certainly not "uncanny."

The next Sunday he sat with them in their pew, and the superintendent assigned him a place in the Sunday school. It added much to Genie's enjoyment to think what a privilege it must be to this poor boy, after being kept away so long, and he had told of always going to the "auld kirk" with his "mither:" she was so glad he could come!

But to their great surprise, at evening he stoutly protested against going with them then or ever again.

"It was nae like kirk at all, saving the bit prayer, an' the people dinna get on their feet e'en; an' they dinna sing no psalm, but let them men an' women sing the warld's sangs, an' mak' muckle noise lik' ilka beastie."

It was in vain the astonished girls expostulated and explained. Davie was respectful, but he was firm and determined. He couldn't go again, and he "hoped the gude Lord wad forgie him for this once being there on a Sunday."

Jessie came in, according to appointment, to go with them to the evening service. They both began at once to tell the story; but, Beulah being the faster talker and the more indignant, Genie left it with her. Jessie laughed, serious as the matter was, at Beulah's excitement.

"Why, Beulah darling! I am afraid if you had lived in Salem in that sorry old time you would have been the first to burn the witches, and scourge the Quakers. Don't you see, dear, this is a matter of religious tolerance? Davie has been brought up to just one mode of worship, — perhaps has not known there was any other, — and it seemed to him desecration and impiety. It is not just obstinacy or bad taste: it is a case of conscience. Poor little fellow! it must have been such a disappointment to him too! I don't think I would hang poor Davie, girls; I can tell you of something that I think will be better: there is a little Scotch Presbyterian church somewhere on the north side; I don't know just where, but I think I can find it; and suppose we all go there with Davie to-night. Wouldn't that be better? You know," she went on in her sweet low tone, "we would not offend one of Christ's little ones."

"Jessie, you're a jewel," cried Beulah, kissing her; "and I"—

"What?" said Genie.

"Am a little chimney soon heated. But why didn't we see all this, Genie?"

"We do now," said Genie, her cheeks glowing. "And I believe Davie really did it for conscience' sake; and it must have been hard too, for I am sure it would grieve him to say what would seem disrespectful to us. But don't you think, Miss Jessie, it is narrow-minded for any sect to set up as having the only right mode of worship?"

"Yes, for any, mine or thine," she said, smiling. She stopped a moment, and the color came up into her cheeks, she felt herself such a child in sacred truths. "Don't you remember, Beulah, what we were reading of St. Paul's Monday night? 'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.' If we

have that spirit in our hearts, we shall not quarrel about how our brethren shall pray or sing."

Jessie's project was carried out. The church was small and plain, and the worshippers few; but Davie took his little Bible from under his arm, and followed every word of the minister while he read, and stood devoutly during the long prayer; and when he joined in the psalm, —

> "O thou, my soul! bless God the Lord;
> And all that in me is
> Be stirred up, his holy name
> To magnify and bless.
> Bless, O my soul! the Lord thy God,
> And not forgetful be
> Of all his gracious benefits
> He hath bestowed on thee," —

the tears ran down his shining face. It was easy for his companions to see that Davie

could say with all his heart now, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

The young minister had met Miss Jessie in society once: he recognized her now, — people did not often forget Jessie Moore, — and came down from the high pulpit, at the close of the services, to greet her. After the introductions to Genie and Beulah, she said, —

"We have brought you a new parishioner, Mr. Malcolm, — Davie Campbell. He lives at Mr. Blakeslee's. He has not been long from Scotland, and he cannot feel happy to worship with us; so we must commend him to your care."

The gentleman's accent in conversation with Miss Jessie was scarcely perceptible; but as he extended his hand to Davie he said, in broadest Scotch, —

"Dawvid Campbell. 'Tis a gude name. I'm unco' glad to see yo', laddie."

Davie's happy face was a sight which did the girls good, as he looked up quickly, and tried to speak; but the words stuck in his throat.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. BLAKESLEE'S mother was spared for three precious days with her son. He scarcely left her: sitting at her bedside, humble, sorrowing, her hand clasped in his, her tender loving tones in his ears, all these later years seemed to slip away, and the hard crust of worldliness and selfishness to fall off.

He was again a boy, a youth, a young man, with mother and sister rejoicing over his successes, sympathizing with his disappointments, — the little loving world at home bracing and heartening him for the

world outside. "Mother," "Johnnie," "Mamie:" how the old, dear names came back, like sweet strains of old music! He had almost forgotten them.

He could not have told how many the days were, this methodical man of business; for they were not days and nights, days for work and nights for sleep: they were all in "mother's room," resting a little when she slept, wakeful at all times when she was. It was just a blessed season when they tarried on the mountain apart by themselves, — such a season as God gives us sometimes, to become afterward a precious memory, valued beyond every earthly treasure.

The Lord had been breaking up and preparing the hard ground of Mr. Blakeslee's heart, for this time. It had been strangely stirred and troubled and softened, even before he came into this Chamber of Peace.

He knew now that the Father was call-

ing his child, the Shepherd was seeking his sheep. Long years before he had heard the loving voice, and had said again and again, "Yes, but not now." Outside he might still have resisted the pleading call, drowned it in busy cares for a time, held out a little longer. But here, where he was the only one outside the fold, where the mother waited on the threshold of glory for him, he had no wish to resist: he hasted like the prodigal, even running to rest in his Father's embrace. Then the aged saint said, "Now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

For a little time she lingered yet, speaking wise and timely words of the Master's work and word and ways, to the new servant she was leaving behind her, strains of joyful praise and thanksgiving to her covenant-keeping God, and sweet tender words of consolation and cheer to the faithful daugh-

ter whose life seemed almost bound with hers; and then she left them.

Mr. Blakeslee remained a week longer, until the old house could be closed, and they could return together; Warner, and also Mr. Bates, having written him to feel no concern about any thing at home—it was all right; and, further, Warner hoped to be at home himself very soon after, having matters nearly arranged to his satisfaction in Buffalo.

I cannot tell you much of that home-coming: it is too sacred, and too sweet. You must feel it to know. Beulah had staid till the lamps were lighted, and the train due; and then she had stolen away to her home, with Davie Campbell for company, feeling that no one must intrude upon this re-union.

How much of the good was old, and how much was new? and which was best? It

was the old joy for the mother and daughter to clasp each other closely, to look into each other's eyes, and read the same love, the same truth, the same brightness; and Genie could gladly have rested there in her mother's arms, if she had not caught the shadow of pain, the memory of the fresh loss, which it brought to dear aunt Mary: then she gently released herself: her joy must not add to another's sorrow. Every thing about the house seemed so natural and like home to Mrs. Blakeslee, as if she might herself have set it all in order that very day.

But it was new and strange to her, and seemed scarcely real, when Mr. Blakeslee gathered "his daughter" in his arms, and kissed her fondly, and afterward followed her with loving eyes, calling her to him often. It was new, too, to see Genie's self-reliant hospitality, as she took all care upon herself, seeing quietly to the comfort of

each, and presiding over her household with the unconscious little dignity which sat so prettily upon her.

But oh! among the new things, there was nothing like the half-hour before they retired, when Mr. Blakeslee took the Bible, and read the fifty-first Psalm, and then led his family in prayer. When Genie rose, the tears were streaming down her cheeks; and in her great joy she turned, and threw her arms around Mr. Blakeslee's neck.

"O father, dear father, I am so happy!" she said.

Davie had brought in letters from Warner. Mr. Blakeslee read his aloud, with much satisfaction, as it announced his son's return in a day or two. But Genie put hers unopened in her pocket, that she might enjoy it at her leisure in her own room.

"I have a story for you, Genie [he wrote]: Where shall I begin? Do you remember, when I

was sick, Beulah's telling me that you always prayed for me, and I told you I knew it? I don't know how I knew it, but I felt it almost from the time your mother went away. And I saw, too, the gentle, unobtrusive little ways in which you tried, and I believe God through you, to lead both father and me to better ways and things. Will it make you very glad, little sister, to know that God has answered those prayers? I don't know that I can tell you all the way by which the Lord has led me. The hymns we sang together stuck to me. Mr. Hutchieson's old-year sermon gave me a great deal to think of; and little things day after day seemed to deepen that impression.

"And yet I believe, when I found I must leave home, there was a secret determination in the bottom of my heart to leave all these things behind me.

"You know how different it proved. Through Sargent Dennison's kind invitation, my first evening here was spent in a religious meeting; and the first song they sang was the very assurance you had sent me away with, and I had not forgotten it: —

'For you I am praying, —
I am praying for you.'

"I went every evening: they were glorious meetings; for the Lord was there in great power, and my heart was kindled, and glowed as it had never done before. But it was not there in the crowd, but alone in my own room, that I gave my heart and life to God.

"I am so impatient to come home, I believe no homesick schoolboy ever longed more for it. I want, too, to add my welcome of dear aunt Mary to our home; and I want to relieve father from the worry of business while his heart is so sad over the loss of his mother. Do you know, Genie, I think sometimes that the Lord broke up our little family this winter, and sent us divers ways, only the one little bright star left to shine for us at home, that he might unite us again as we were never united before.

"There is another thing I think I must tell you: I have just written a long letter to Jessie Moore. I have told her all this, and some other things besides; and I shall hear the answer from her own lips when I come. I know I have my little sister's God-speed in this too.

"Good-by till I come.

"WARNER."

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